

















# INSIDE INDIA

BY

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IN MEMORY OF  
DR. A. ANSARI

"I consider the brotherhood of man as the only tie, and partitions based on race or religion are, to my mind, artificial and arbitrary . . ."

*A. Ansari*

of the tenth. And I wanted to leave as truthful and objective an account of my period as Alberuni has done of his. Let not the Orientalists and scholars get shocked at my presumptuousness. I fully realize the vast difference between myself and Alberuni, the master. His account of tenth-century India is unequalled in its presentation of Indian science, thought, life in its objective handling; above all, the quality of Alberuni's work seems the highest among the strangers who have written about India. Quality is God's own gift, but every artist, however small, may attempt to cast in some humble material a figure already chiselled and carved in marble and gold by great artists.

I want to thank Mr. Mahadev Desai for his corrections and suggestions in the sections which concern Mahatma Gandhi and Hinduism, specially in Part III; Professor Malkani for his kind help in supplying me with material concerning the Untouchables, and for his enlightening talks on Hinduism; Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya for her sketch of the Salt Satyagraha and other information concerning Young India; Professor Mujeeb, of Jamia, and Dr. Zakir Husein, the principal of Jamia, for supplying me with material on the Muslem side and for giving me the opportunity to study Jamia; and many other Indian friends, both Hindu and Muslem, who do not wish to have their names printed, but who discussed so freely the social, religious, and economic troubles which beset India. I want also to add that I have respected the wishes of those who wanted to be quoted in full and in their own words, regardless of my own views and regardless of the fact whether they wished their names printed or not.

The transliteration adopted is that of V. A. Smith's *Oxford History of India* for historical names.

HALIDE EDIB

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## INTRODUCTORY

TALES had three ways of beginning in my country:

"Once upon a time . . ." That is common to the whole world, but will not do for what I have to say about India. India is no longer "was": it is very much "is."

"In the beginning of time, and in the end of time. . . ." That is a more adequate beginning. It forestalls Einstein and Relativity. The event may be in the remotest past or in the far-off future: all depends from which point you are watching it. In India there are ideas in its remotest past which will be factors in human history for thousands of years to come; there are facts in its present condition which should belong to the jungle, to the early appearance of man upon earth.

"Once there was, and once there was not. . . ." Thus the storytellers of our childhood began every Indian tale. That would half do. It reminds one of the solid atoms of old physics which have become the electrons of neo-physics. Once they were; but now? . . . One can see only luminous traces marking their paths. So for the India of old. In spite of the deep wisdom of its philosophers, seers, and rulers, it was the invisible spirits who pulled the strings of power and shaped the destiny of its children. To-day, like atoms, they are only luminous traces.

That was my first glimpse of India.

Next came an English governess who told me about the India of forty years ago. She had been the wife of an English tea-planter and had spent thirty years of her life in the country. The Indian scene she described was no longer dominated by the unseen spirits. India had become the playground of an Imperialist race. They ruled as Olympian gods. They rode

elephants, they hunted tigers and all the wild beasts of the jungle. The humblest among them loomed across the scene as all-powerful as a Chingiz Khan.

The Indians remain in the background. Only two live in my memory from that period. One is a punkah-man, fanning a white-skinned member of the ruling race through a hot night; the other is an Untouchable, digging garbage heaps for a meal, patiently tearing out bits of carrion, and then slinking away hastily, removing his shadow from the highways like a ghost. So in the foreground were the English and in the background the Untouchables. The intermediate masses were dim, and arranged in an intricate pattern, each part being fixed. This human pattern never changed. The design was rigidly bound by lines of Caste. Caste frontiers were eternal. Trespassers were ruthlessly persecuted.

The white men, according to my governess, had extraordinary backbone. Not only coloured men, even wild beasts succumbed before their strength. They alone were invulnerable against the powers of the unseen. They shaped their own destiny, and walked the path they chose.

Only once were they taken unawares, said Mrs. Percy, my governess, though that time it was complete. She called it the "Mutiny." Only that once had that immutable pattern changed. The intermediate masses had flooded the scene and had got the better of their invulnerable rulers. The description she gave might have come from the Old Testament. The motive—as she told me—was strange. All this awesome upheaval was due to the objection of some Indians to pig's flesh and fat. The people had risen, not because of tyranny or oppression, but because they were made to touch the accursed swine-flesh by their masters.

The end shemade as terrible as the beginning. The mutineers

crept back into the earth, their very ghosts could no longer rise and haunt the Indian earth.

That was the second glimpse.

Next came the India of fiction. It began with Rudyard Kipling. Never had genius captured animal life with such truth, though the form was fanciful; and no other land, ancient or modern, was such a home for animals. They lived their lives as animals should; yet they made one realize the oneness of all life on earth.

The human side of India was given me by the works of Abdul-Hak-Hamid, the greatest dramatic poet of late nineteenth-century Turkey. His figures were those of romance. In 1908 the Turkish stage presented *Lady Finten*, the story of an aristocratic English woman and her Hindu servant and lover, Davalagiro. Lady Finten was acted by a puny Armenian actress with a shrill voice and a fussy manner. She was anything but English. Davalagiro was acted by a Turkish actor who at least had the physique of a frontier Indian; and the turban he wore was of the right shade of red. He was supposed to be a monstrosity . . . a madman. He appeared on a make-believe ship in a storm. He was on his way to join his lady-love. He waved his long arms and roared:

I have taken the road with such determination that I will not turn my face from the goal, though my tombstone barricade my path. Neither the white-capped waves, nor fire-spitting clouds—no, not even volcanoes shall stop me on my way. . . .

The make-believe ship rose and fell and artificial thunder rumbled from behind, while Davalagiro waxed wilder and wilder, shouting:

The elephants fall down, and the ants rise up and wail; lions and tigers spring from hill-top to hill-top. . . . I am like the flood,

I rain death and destruction! My tears are rivers of evil, my sighs and groans are gales. . . . I rend thy darkness, oh Night, and plunge my eyes into the Dawn! Before the menace of thy lightning, I shall not quail. . . .

This sounded un-Indian. My previous glimpses had made me believe impossible that any Indian should take his destiny in his own hands and defy both nature and the unseen forces. This coolie raved of tearing the darkness and facing the dawn because of a desire, because of an aim.

That was the third glimpse.

. . . . .

Beware of pronouncing on a country when you have only met its sons and daughters abroad. You may form a pretty good opinion, or you may be totally misled. A person without his background is like a floating plant, difficult to identify. Further, what is personal may appear national; and what is national, personal. India is immense, and its culture bewilderingly intricate. Two men from India, both of learning and experience, may give you exact information which appears contradictory. It is difficult to grasp relative importance, and harmonize aspects with the whole.

I met Indians in the flesh for the first time on a ship going from Port Said to London in 1909. It was the Indian stewards and sailors who arrested my attention rather than the Indian passengers. The stewards had fine but rather peculiar features; especially the mouths were delicately drawn and extremely sensitive. The lips were those of men given to austere lives and ascetic thoughts. I was told they were all Hindus. Yet they could not have been the men their features and expressions indicated. The unusual purity and fineness were probably ancestral masks.

The sailors moved about at their work like the wind sweeping the deck, with their swift, light feet. Strange these feet, unlike any I had hitherto seen. The toes all on the same level, short and wide apart, almost fan-like. If I had been told that those sailors sewed or embroidered with their toes in private I could have believed it. More than that, I had the feeling that the owners of those feet always had a sense of the danger of the unseen, and therefore had to walk stealthily. Fear must be a habit with them, I thought. "Protect us, O Lord, from the suspicion which is bred within the breast, from Jinns and from men!" were the Koranic verses which came to my mind.

It was in 1912 that I saw Indians at closer range. That was the aftermath of the Balkan disasters, and the Indian Red Crescent were in the forefront of Istanbul Society.

Dr. Ansari was the head of the Mission and, to me, the most representative Indian Muslim. Externally he has not changed much. The same small moustache, the brooding mouth with that delicate design which one associated with the Hindu, very black and energetic eyebrows stretched over his deep-set eyes. They were purposeful eyes, very kind in spite of the unwavering determination in their depths. His clothes had that masculine elegance which one associated with London. He talked very little, but always to the point; and said next to nothing about India. Barring a distinct individuality he was not different from our own eminent physicians. The younger members of the Mission worked with zeal, and they did not seem very different from our own young people.

In 1918 the Indian regiments of the occupying forces paraded the streets of Istanbul. They were colonial representatives of the victorious nations marching up and down the capital of one vanquished. One could not associate them with the old

friends of the Red Crescent, nor think of them as the Davagliros of fiction.

From 1919 onwards India and Indians played another part. They were trying to help Turkey, and the Khilafat Movement was launched for that purpose. As for what it meant to Turkey, once could say that it belongs to the past, but for India that movement had a different significance. And that I could never grasp until I went to India.

After 1925 the Indian picture becomes confused. "India is a prison, and we all are prisoners and slaves," said a Muslim. A Hindu painted a terrible picture of dire poverty against a background of shameless luxury. "There are a few hundred languages, and a few thousand castes at loggerheads—can there ever be an Indian nation under such conditions," wrote a journalist.

Above these blurred scenes of disorder and misery gradually rose the figure of Mahatma Gandhi. The Western artist seized upon him as an original theme. He was presented as an antique prophet, or a modern revolutionary, each by turn. The daily papers pounced on him, or rather, on what he wore, and what he ate.

The technique of present-day journalism is deadly for the celebrity it tries to make into a star. The star sets as suddenly as it rises. The reformer, the film-actor, the boxing champion, even the swindler or the gangster, are all treated alike and made to blaze into headlines. There is no sense of value, no discrimination. The act does not matter. It is the size of it. The thief has as much news value as the saint if his swindle is astronomical. One got neither a clear nor a sympathetic picture of Mahatma Gandhi from the world Press. But the words flashed and faded in connection with his activities were food for serious thought. . . . Non-co-operation, Non-

violence. . . . The first might have meant a kind of strike; the second was a new term.

When I accepted Dr. Ansari's invitation tendered in the name of Jamia-Millia-Islamia (the Muslem university in Delhi) to deliver extension lectures for the year of 1935, I had no definite picture of India in mind. I had listened to a great many Indians of different persuasions, but together they lacked coherence. Thousands of sounds, no harmony. It was like the tuning stage of a great orchestra—a symphony-nation.

The Indian Ocean is India's real threshold, and it begins immediately after one sails from Aden. The Sahara and the Indian Ocean are the two places in which one feels the complete uniqueness of environment. It was night, and there was a cinema show in the hall. I went on deck and sat, my head against the rails, my face towards the hissing darkness. The silken black expanse below heaved and breathed, swelling softly. The sky was a dull blue. Its nondescript and faded colour was unfamiliar to one used to the rich shades of the Mediterranean. A kind of damp warmth emanated from it. It was like a ghost-sky. No clouds above, but on the fringes of this anaemic dome there were a row of smoke-coloured shapes. They looked like trees planted upside-down. Their gnarled roots pierced the dull blue void above; their branches dipped into the hissing blackness below.

It was reminiscent of a scientific film I had once seen in London, which had attempted to recreate the prehistoric atmosphere in which mammoth animals of inconceivable shapes walked the earth, or flew and fought, in a lifeless damp blue haze. Fantastic flora hung rootless in the moist mid-air. I had been given the feeling of an atmosphere where creation had



conceived humanity with immeasurable slowless. Past, present, and future were as yet undifferentiated. This I believe was my truest foresight of India.

On January 9th, at seven o'clock in the morning, the boat reached Bombay. The first face to welcome me was that of a young woman with a red mark on her smooth bronzed forehead. She was Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, an outstanding figure in the life of young India. I did not know that then, but even if she had been a nobody I would remember her still. The sensitive lips, the perpendicular lines at the corners of the mouth which came and went: nothing sharp about the lines of that beautiful face. All merged into pleasing curves and that masterpiece of a smile played on it. She had thick and straight eyebrows over her lustrous coffee-coloured eyes. They were a relief to see after daily contact with women on the boat who had the plucked, curved eyebrows of fashionable Europe.

My host and his wife offered me open hospitality for the day. He was an industrialist, a product of a German university and a Muslem. The house was full of people.

First the Press. The Hindu reporter from Madras was enterprising enough to beat a New-Yorker in the able way he could extract words from a tired traveller. The Muslem reporters were timid, tongue-tied, and the Anglo-Indian patronizing.

"What do you think of birth control?"

I at once knew that Margaret Sangers was in India.

"What do you think about mixed education?"

Fortunately the interview came to an end without another ultra-modern sex problem in education being raised. I believe the Anglo-Indian reporter gave me a bad mark: he put me down as a reactionary old woman. On the whole I had a good impression of the Press. This was strengthened with

time and further contacts. The native Press has more idealism than the European. It is at a younger stage. If it is not as advanced in technique, it is more serious and reflects more truly India than the European Press does Europe. One is conscious of a country behind this Press, seething with many currents of thought, and struggling to externalize them. The forefront is politics, which is not different from other countries; but the lever which regulates politics is religion, which is different. Whether it is a religion of a sectarian order, or anti-dogmatic, it still is religion.

I was glad when my hosts took me to see Bombay in the afternoon. It was Id, the Muslem holiday. There was a crowd as colourful as in an *Arabian Nights*' tale. Evidently women were not as secluded as is supposed. Young men and women moved about together freely, often holding hands. I enjoyed the human side of it, but I thought Bombay architecture disappointing. Candy-box fussiness and ornament—the conception of a European reader of the *Arabian Nights*, who takes it as typical of the whole Orient.

When the evening fell and dusk wiped out the gaudy surfaces, the city changed. As one looked down upon it from the Malabar Hills one thought of Los Angeles from the Beverly Hills. The City of Bombay became an inverted cup, studded with a thousand lights. This uncalled-for reminiscence of America persisted when I took the train in the evening at nine o'clock. The station was the best modern building in the city. When a public building of utility is the best monument, it signifies a certain type of civilization.

Kamaladevi introduced a group of young girls in white, holding hands, and walking like a garland in motion. She told me that they had all been in prison during the non-co-operation movement. Kamala's was a long term. When

the women of the veiled East face prison, that also signifies something.

The train moved on. As we passed through lighted stations, the tops of red turbans appeared. Coolies were moving about. There was a chorus of voices shouting. The refrain was, "Hindu chai, Mussulman chai, Hindu pani, Mussulman pani!" Strange that the Hindus and Muslems should have different water and different tea to drink! Why did no one sell water and tea specially for Parsees, or any other sect? Of all the forces in action it was evident that the Hindu and the Muslem were the foremost.

A hand tapped at the window. A tall Englishman, an official of the railway, asked whether I needed anything. He was the first Englishman in India I had talked with; and he looked quite different from the kind Mrs. Percy used to describe. Nothing of the Chingiz Khan about him. Yet the Hindu tea-seller, the Mussulman tea-seller, and the English official seemed to be the three principal clues to the Indian puzzle. One came up against them each time one tried to solve it.

At nine o'clock in the evening I was at Delhi. The crowd which welcomed me wore Gandhi-caps. They represented the Jamia-Millia. The professors were distinguishable by their tightly buttoned grey coats and the gravity of their expressions. "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar," echoed to the roof of the ultra-modern, American-style station. The cry means a cheer in India. For us it was only a call to prayer. It also is the cry of the soldier in a hand-to-hand fight. "Great is God," how much like asking divine protection because he is about to face death! Or perhaps it is a cry for pardon because he is going to kill a fellow-creature.

I shook hands with Dr. Ansari, who stood at the head of

the crowd. His Indian personality now struck me forcibly for the first time. In spite of his long suffering for India, and the association of his name with India's principal political movements, he had remained in my memory as the humanitarian doctor he was. I believe I was affected by externals. This time, from the top of his head down to his feet, he was clothed in stuff woven and designed by his countrymen and women.



PART I

India Seen Through Salam House



## CHAPTER I

### Concerning Dr. Ansari's House

DAR-ES-SALAM is Dr. Ansari's residence. The name means House of Salam; also House of Islam. The spirit of Islam is broad enough to justify the name. But the house has its international and universal aspects as well. I was a guest for nearly two months.

Salam House is a huge octagonal building of one storey, overlooking a square lawn. Cars move in and out along two straight parallel drives. A few steps lead up to the marble terrace, which runs the length of the façade. A profusion of red, white, and purple flowers in magenta-red pots are spread about, or twine themselves round the marble columns of the terrace. The Congress flag waves overhead. It is an historical place; but to my mind its present significance is greater than its past. Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Irwin met there on a memorable occasion. At the time, the Parliamentary Board and the Shadow Cabinet also had their meetings there. The ancient, the mediaeval, and the modern came together: the ideas and aspirations of divergent personalities meet, coalesce, and the personalities disperse to set in motion new trends elsewhere. In the free India of the future, that house will be one of the principal landmarks in its making.

From the walls of the drawing-room the faces of my famous countrymen of 1912 looked down and watched the India of 1935. There were also Afghans and Persian faces of fame. Muslem India has a window which opens not only on the Near and Middle East but on the Far East as well.

In the drawing-room itself were both East and West. Two



Englishwomen, delegates to the Women's Conference at Karachi, had dropped in to see me. One was Maude Royden, with her fascinating face; and the other Mrs. Corbett Ashby, in her Britannic elegance. Neither were they the only signs of Western interpenetration. The Indians themselves spoke and thought in the same terms as any intellectual bred in Oxford. British domination may end some time; but British influence will remain through the culture and education derived from the English and take part in the future shaping of India.

My bedroom opened on to the centre court, which the house surrounded. There was a pond and a fountain and more red flowers in pots. Most of the rooms, including those of Begam Ansari's apartment, had doors to this court. A servant lighted the way, lamp in hand.

"What time breakfast?"

"Half-past seven."

"Wellington time or standard time?"

"What is that?"

He had a queer way of counting on his fingers before he spoke in the broken English which he had acquired while serving Dr. Ansari's alien guests. He made me understand by signs rather than by words that there were two times in India, Wellington time being half an hour in advance. The West must hustle a bit. How strange that even time has no unity in this country!

I sat in bed and listened to the many voices of the Indian night. I thought I heard babies crying and strange laughter. I learned that these were monkeys and jackals, who had their peculiar night life. There was flapping of wings. Two birds flew into my room through the open top-window and

perched on the poles of my bedstead. I felt the quaint oneness of life in India. No wonder people made rigid barriers of caste: they were the only things clear-cut.

I remained awake for a long time thinking. That became a habit with me in India. Every day my mind was confused. Country seemed to me like Allah's workshop: gods, men, and nature abounded in their most beautiful and most hideous; ideas and all the arts in their most ancient and most modern styles lay about pell-mell. Once I used to think that a first-hand knowledge of Russia and America would enable one to sense the direction which the world was taking; but this India must surely have its share in shaping the future. Not because of its immemorial age, but because of the new life throbbing in it. Perhaps the same is true of China, of Japan. How can one tell? How much must one see and understand before being able to have any idea of the working of history? In India I decided to leave my mind open to whatever I might see. Who knows, perhaps I may be able to record at least some of it.

Dr. Ansari gave me ten days to rest and look around before beginning my lectures at Jamia. I had better introduce him first.

He is a U.P. man. That means something, because Indian intellectuals are divided as to whether U.P. or frontier men will lead India in the future, when the country is independent. To all appearances Indian Independence may not come in Dr. Ansari's lifetime. Nevertheless it is interesting to note what characteristics the future rulers of India are required to possess, according to those who support the U.P. man: these are vision, versatility in thought and ability to organize, I am told.

Dr. Ansari is descended from men who were distinguished as divines, administrators, warriors, and judges throughout Northern India. If a man inherits ancestral qualities, then Dr. Ansari must have a deep spiritual tendency, organizing ability, and courage, as well as a legal mind. Withal he chose to become a doctor.

He is rooted deep in the Indian soil. His early schooling was in Hyderabad. After winning a scholarship for postgraduate studies in science from Hyderabad University, he went to Edinburgh as a medical student. In his time he was the only Indian to have been admitted as a resident medical officer to the Charing Cross Hospital and as House Surgeon to the Lock Hospital. This meant unusual abilities and earnestness of purpose in his profession. It also meant a serious schooling in the scientific methods of the West. Among Muslims he is a rare example of a doctor who has adopted the modern method; for in India the old school of medicine dominates. Dr. Ansari may be considered as bridging the Muslim outlook and Western science. There are many others now, but he was the first.

In 1910 he settled in Delhi and opened a practice. In 1912 he was drawn away from home by the Balkan Wars. He was the head of the Indian Red Crescent, as I have already mentioned. His visit to Turkey made him again a bridge, this time between the Near East and India. After 1918 he was one of the organizers of the Khilafat movement and one of its strongest supporters. The Khilafat movement may be understood and interpreted in more than one way, but a discussion of it does not belong here. It had, however, two curiously contradictory results in India: that of uniting the Muslims and Hindus around a common activity; and that of dividing them. Dr. Ansari's work belongs to the first. Hence he is a

third bridge—that is, one between Muslems and Hindus. This has had a telling effect on his career as a politician. His conception of citizenship is based on equality and co-operation among Indians of conflicting sects and ideas. This he has never altered; but it has not been easy to maintain it. He became a target for the slings and arrows of all outraged communalists, Muslem or Hindu. It also brought him into conflict with the reigning Power, and imprisonment was the result. His health, already delicate, was seriously impaired. Nor was this the only hardship he had to bear. Criticism and intrigue in the East has been brought to a fine art of pernicious and insidious subtlety. However, he has earned the respect and confidence of the élite of his country, even of those who do not agree with him. We find him presiding over Conferences qualified as All-Indian, or Non-Party. In 1935 he was a member of the Shadow Cabinet of the Congress Party. So much for his public and political life. At the same time he continued to practise, and was perhaps among the few famous doctors of India. Most of the great of the land were his patients. Also the poor. There were certain hours he gave to the poor daily, no matter what profit he could have made from those hours. And it was not only the health of the poor for which he gave his time and trouble. No man in need was turned empty-handed from his door.

To get a glimpse of his family life one must lift the curtain of that left-wing apartment opening on to the court opposite my room. Begam Ansari lived there with her personal servants, and her adopted daughter, who was also her niece. She was a Muslem Purdah lady of the best type. She spent her leisure in reading, being a scholar in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. She was very pious, very charitable. She saw no man other than her relatives, except Mahatma Gandhi. Her attitude

towards her servants reminded me of Old Turkey. I would often hear young girls taking lessons from different teachers on the verandah behind the curtain. They were as free and as natural as the daughter of the house. There was no trace of class feeling.

Unfortunately I could not talk with the Begam in a common language. Her daughter interpreted. But I did not feel a stranger to her way of life. I could understand a good many of her Arabic and Persian quotations, and a little from the Urdu. Her apartment consisted of a vast hall, with rooms opening on to it; and the hall itself opened on to another vast terrace, which was always bathed in brilliant sunlight. In her garden there was a pigeon-house. Beautiful, the pigeons and the doves, and she feeding them. Very Indian.

That side of the house represented Dr. Ansari's Eastern self. The Begam had not shared that Westernizing which was part of her husband's work; but she was tolerant of those who had, and in no way stood in the way of her daughter. That young person was undergoing emancipation by easy stages. She appeared at meals, though only when certain people were present; but she went about freely in her sari, drove a car as daring as any American girl, and took a keen interest in the affairs of her country, cultural, social, and political. It was a healthy way of preparing a Muslem girl for life, and there would be no greater hurry for women to take a more active part in the country's destiny if present-day India were not facing such tremendous odds. The Indians of to-day are born to set right a time that is out of joint, the cursed spite of centuries.

It was pleasant to have Zohra initiate me into the ways of life of a girl of her upbringing. Strangely enough quite a number of her problems as I had already guessed were very

much like my own at her age. Her life seemed to be an Indian version of my life at thirty-five years ago in Turkey. She was too individualistic to fit into a fixed group, whether inside or outside of Purdah. Seclusion has its drawbacks; but to have one foot behind a veil and another in modern freedom is especially difficult. The respective tempos of Purdah and modern life are "Largo" and "Prestissimo." To dance with one foot to slow music and with the other to quick needs a spiritual acrobat. It has its advantages, too. The girl has the chance to judge and compare; and can always retire and have privacy enough to study.

Zohra's interests were curiously enough like my own—literature and history. They did not only serve to satisfy her intellectual appetite; but she believed they had lessons for those who are in a transitional period. She knew her country's history astoundingly well. In spite of its romantic appeal to her youthful imagination, she did not allow her sentiment to prejudice her judgment. Though a Muslem, perhaps *because* a Muslem, she had neither the superiority nor the inferiority complex. Above all, she did not feel Muslems to be an alien race, a minority grafted on Indian soil, and doomed to remain as such. She was Indian to the core. Asoka was a part of her past history just as much as Humayun or Babur. Daily in touch with Jamia professors, I believe she was very much influenced by their points of view.

I used to look forward to her morning visits to my room; and she usually came with me to see whatever was to be seen in Delhi. She both humanized and dramatized for me the great monumental edifices which would otherwise have been only heaps of stones more or less artistically arranged. She knew all the legends around the lives of those who had lived in those ruins.



## CHAPTER II

### Seeing the Old Monuments

DELHI is a white city. Capitals may have their sites selected for strategic or economic reasons; but consciously or unconsciously the choice must be influenced by atmospheric effects. They all have their particular light. The glittering white whiteness of Paris, the mauve streaks in the air of Prague, the smoke-grey of London, and the sharp glare of New York are all very special to those cities. As for the light of Istanbul . . . well, there is nothing like it in the whole world. The whiteness of Delhi is utterly different from that of Paris; but it is as sharp and clear-cut as in that great Western capital. That vagueness and dimness which are in the atmosphere of most Indian cities are not there.

The domestic architecture of New Delhi is a happy discovery. Those low circular, immaculate buildings, with their colourful gardens, suit the place—more than do the old quarters. Strangely enough the old Delhi, picturesque with the usual Oriental bazaars, seems to be out of the picture. The neat, new bungalows with old monuments as a background are just right both from a practical and aesthetic point of view. The gaudy, decrepit, dusty, dirty old quarters could be razed to the ground without loss.

At first I did not look forward to visiting the old monuments. Palaces, with or without royalty in them, oppress me. Further, there were such bewilderingly contradictory criticisms. Unparalleled in beauty and proportion, said some. Persianized, Hinduized, Arabized, too much of a mixture, said others. Perfect, but perfection means



the end of things and the beginning of decadence, said others.

However, I was glad when we had crossed the barracks, which were at the entrance of the fort, and found ourselves in the lovely gardens. My companions talked with appreciation of Lord Curzon's service to India by the serious way in which he had organized the preservation of the monuments. The twelve edifices, each representing a month of the year, in that charming garden would please the most fastidious eye. In spite of their external ultra-fancifulness they have a force of character of their own. The finish and the perfection to which the moderns are objecting are only on the surface. Their architectural soundness cannot be hidden by their elaborate make-up. The Persian inscription of the divan-room, saying that if heaven descended on earth it would be there, is not such a vain boast after all.

They reminded me a little of our own Brusa buildings. True the Brusa monuments represent a young, creative, but immature period, while those of Delhi represent a climax in history. Yet the faded tulips and carnations carved on these stones have the same life-like and irresistible gaiety. The simplicity of soul born of the prairies of Central Asia has not been altogether stifled by the sophisticated builders of Mogul Delhi.

We stood on the terrace and looked at the distant Jumna. It had once flowed below this terrace, but that was long ago. I must have mused aloud on what all these monuments meant in the way of labour and taxation to the poor subjects of those royal builders. My companion was saying:

"Oh, they kept off unemployment . . . think of the work it gave to thousands; and what they got in wages must have eased the burden of taxation."

So autocrats of all times must keep their subjects busy, and give them bread. Public buildings on a huge scale solve the unemployment problem for modern dictators also. There is something to be said even for Pharaoh, who used the Jews to build the Pyramids. Labour, even slave labour retards, if it does not actually prevent, any rising against tyranny.

The monument in Delhi which impressed me most was Tughlak's tomb. Daring, boldness, and incomparable ingeniousness and originality in design. Here was a man who did not accept synthetic symbolism. A little mad perhaps. Nevertheless honest, rugged, and sturdy to a degree. The tomb was a tent, simple and realistic, such as any old conqueror would have erected in a camp of the living; but it was of reddish-brown stone instead of canvas or silk, and it was a giant of a tent.

On the way to Agra we met groups of village folk going hither and thither. We were going to see the "Taj" by moonlight. This is the proper thing for a visitor to do. Whether it is a peasant woman or a Rani, all Indian women have the grace of a picture painted on an antique jar. The villages were mostly composed of thatch-roofed mud huts, with dirty, untidy squares. Not very different from some of our own villages. The men looked less healthy than the women. Some of them lay on raised boards in the street, evidently suffering from malaria. The women are sturdier. Those who survive hardship, semi-starvation, and child-birth must have unusually resistant constitutions. We also saw wells on the way: oxen draw water by a system which defies even our old ones in antiquity. "In the beginning of time," that is the pervading spirit of these village districts.

One entered Agra through miserable, dirty quarters. Such represent the worst part of the dying and stagnant East, no

matter where they are found. No Eastern person will regret their passing away, though the Western writer in quest of the exotic may regret it. If native picturesqueness cannot be combined with a minimum of the decent conditions of life, let the picturesqueness pass away, and sooner the better. In justice to the Indian masses one word must be added with regard to cleanliness. However squalid their habitation, however dirty the rags that cover them, they keep their bodies cleaner than do the poor of the West. Both Muslems and Hindus wash their bodies, all the intimate parts, even if not in very clean water. The disagreeable smell of toes, and other abominations of the body of which one is conscious in a poor cinema in Europe, one does not have with the Indian masses. They have a constant habit of spitting and wiping their noses with their hands, which offends the eye. Also the lack of drainage in most parts of India, especially in the village districts, is an odoriferous fact. But that does not emanate from the bodies.

As usual, the passage from the squalid to the prosperous is sudden. Speaking for the towns and cities only, there seems to be no intermediary class in the economic scale. There are only the extremely poor and the extremely—shall I say shamelessly :—rich.

We were guests in a progressive Indian house, our host a prominent doctor, and his wife the first Muslem lady who had discarded the veil. At least, she was the first in Agra, for in other cities Muslem women were pointed out to me as having accomplished this feat; we could see very little of them, and that only during meals. At dinner society was mixed, English, Hindus, and Muslems being present. The conversation drifted to the son and the daughter-in-law of Lord Willingdon, who were visiting the city and hunting with some notable rajah in the neighbourhood. Seven wild beasts, tigers and lions,

had been shot. My neighbour at the table said that the rajahs kept a sort of tiger and lion settlement, an artificial jungle, and that the beasts were doped and put in the way of the noble hunters, who could not miss them and yet were safe.

Dr. Ansari, the head of the archeological department (not to be confused with my host) took us around and kindly explained the architecture. He is the author of several original works, I am told, on the Indian architecture of antiquity. He told me that the architect of the "Taj" was a disciple of "Sinan," the great Turkish architect of the sixteenth century. The "Taj" itself, as seen from the terrace of the palace, looked like a gigantic heap of soap-bubbles lighted with mother-of-pearl tints in the blue void.

It was dark when we went to the "Taj." The fanciful delicacy of the decoration was hardly visible. I sat on a marble bench between two rows of black cypresses and watched the slow rise of the moon lighting the white dome. Very dramatic it was to see the moonlight slowly giving relief to the mass of whiteness, without making it too distinct. The door of the central tomb was open. An attendant passed to and fro, and a lovely lamp hanging from the ceiling within lighted the interior. It had a strange poignancy, this wonder of the world, symbolizing the devotion of man to woman throughout the ages. The supreme irony for the Westerner is that it was a Muslem who erected this eternal monument to woman! But that did not matter to me. The thing gave me restfulness and peace. I had stepped out of the range of local influence of any kind, be it of race, religion, or style in art. The spectacle defied intellectual analysis, and was beyond sentimentality. What mattered if the architect was a Turk or a Florentine, or that the king who had it built had his ancestral home in a sturdier, wilder clime? The monument was an Indian master-

piece, regardless of its style and builders. One got an utterly detached sense of history as it flows through the ages. Stratum upon stratum of eras, each one the foundation of the next above it. The race, the faith, even the names given to those eras no longer mattered. "Taj" was the climax of the Mogul regime, the signature of that regime to all the good and all the evil which it had bequeathed upon India.

This mood remained with me for quite a time. The discussion as to whether the Moguls had come to India in quest of riches or of power left me indifferent. Motives of imperialists are as mixed as other human motives. They are never totally idealistic nor totally materialistic. The moment we judge them out of their historic milieu we get a distorted picture. At the moment, what mattered most to me with regard to "Taj" was being a leitmotiv in the great Indian symphony. When I was told that fifty thousand poor people came from all over India every month to see it I had to bow to the enduring sense of value in the inarticulate Indian masses.

At three in the morning we left the "Taj." At noon on the same day I went to the Viceroy's palace for lunch. I was still in the detached mood of the anonymous student of history. Even the excitement of my fellow guests at the idea of being in the Viceroy's palace was a fact to note dispassionately.

The group of buildings, including the Parliament and the Viceroy's palace, though very much in keeping with the domestic architecture of New Delhi, cannot in any way vie with the older monuments. It is certain that no visitors in the far-off future will go to India to see the architectural remains of British rule—for their contribution one must look elsewhere. The only breath-taking sight is the Mogul gardens seen from the palace windows.

I wished I had met Lord Willingdon under less ceremonial

conditions. In some ways he seemed familiar. He might have been one of the last fine gentlemen, a governor of a great Turkish province in the days of Turkish imperialism. The same aristocratic and courteous manner, the same sense of humour tempered with good taste and, above all, the same unconscious sense of power which under no circumstances degenerated into "showing off."

After dinner we went through the palace, and he told me about the British experiment in Indian democracy. I told him I wanted to write a book on India and call it "Indian Portraits." He smiled and said that he, too, would prefer to write Indian portraits. Before I left he was making witty remarks on his daughter-in-law's tiger hunt. I felt sure that he would enjoy the joke I had heard at Agra on that subject, but it was better not to mention it then.

As I gazed at the group of buildings round his palace, I felt that though they might not be esthetically significant their meaning was still very deep. India would never be the same as it was before British rule, just as it had never been the same since Muslem rule. Whither? Whence?



### CHAPTER III

## Concerning Sarojini Naidu and other Indian Women

THERE were two other women guests besides myself at Salam House. The men, of course, were numberless. The house is a caravanserai, and anyone can come to it, the only thing they have to bring being bedding. One of the women guests was an Englishwoman who was a socialist, genuinely in sympathy with the Indian cause; the other was Sarojini Naidu, the foremost Indian woman of the present day.

"What news Akka?" asked Dr. Ansari in the evenings, when Sarojini Naidu returned from her social activities. "Akka" means older sister, the equivalent of "Abla" in Turkish. A considerable number of Congress leaders called her that. A veteran patriot and revolutionary, she has dedicated her whole life to that single aim; and as such she has faced the consequences like anybody else—several terms of imprisonment. I remember well the thrill it gave to every Eastern woman when she presided over the Indian parliament. With Mrs. Sun-Yat-Sen, I believe, she is the best known Eastern woman in politics. But to me her interest lies not in her importance in the political arena, but in herself. She would have stood out in any society, under any circumstances. Her sex would never have prevented her from doing what she wanted, or achieving anything wished. In ancient India I have no doubt she would have been a queen. In the India of 1935 she was a member of the Shadow Cabinet.

I had met her in New York on a lecture tour, and again in England. But the contacts had been brief. She had looked to



me like any Indian woman, in her national costume, speaking perfect English—a product of Eastern and Anglo-Saxon culture. The head of the Chicago Forum had said to me in regard to her: “I always believed India to have a meek and submissive spirit, but Mrs. Naidu upset my notion.” I told him generalizing was dangerous; besides, in this changing world, where even climates are not what they used to be, the spirit must be expected to change.

Sarojini is a poet. I cannot judge her as such, for I read next to no poetry. As an orator she stands high, not only in India, but in the world. That also I could judge only after my Indian visit; for I had not heard her speak in public abroad. In Salam House I became aware of the infinite variety of her moods. I could never size her up. She passed from one mood to a totally unexpected one. When you were thinking her rather cruel, you found her suddenly as tender, as kind, as any woman could be. When you thought her nationalism was expressing itself in somewhat narrow or aggressive terms, you found a universality of spirit, a comprehension of humanity, which led you to think of her as a true citizen of the world.

In the mornings she paid me a flying visit. Always in a different sari, always alert and alive, ready for the day's work. Her social activities alone were enough to tire the strongest man. In the evenings she came back late. She joined us round the fire, throwing herself into a chair, shedding her slippers and warming her bare toes. Satisfaction radiated from her whole being. Her coffee-coloured eyes sparkled from under heavy lids. She talked, gesticulating—with her expressive brown arms—Indian women have limbs which speak.

In the evenings she was usually in a satirical mood. Scene after scene she enfolded from the lives of the great of India. She throbbed with the fearful intellect of a futurist artist, who

will wickedly, though unwittingly, distort and colour men and events to suit a fancy or whim. I do not think she deliberately meant to be untruthful: it was nothing but a powerful sense of caricature. I thought she lacked a sense of humour those evenings; for humour tones down, while she exaggerated. Further, humorous people have an inner submission to events; but, as the man in Chicago had said, she had not the slightest tendency to submissiveness. On the contrary she had the sort of personality which demanded submission from others. She had all the traits of a dictator; and I believe, if she had not also had the artistic temperament which prevents the owner concentrating upon a too narrow issue, she would have become one. As it is, I used to think that in Sarojini Naidu the politician, India had lost a dramatist. Yet sitting at a desk and submitting to hard and patient labour was not the sort of thing she would have willingly undertaken. Her creativeness expressed itself directly in the life she leads.

In the mornings I found her on the lawn, basking in the sun, with her long hair down her back. There was always a small table before her, with a pile of books and papers on it. She glanced through the books, scribbled on a pad, talking all the while to the people of both sexes who visited. Sarojini under the morning sun was quite different from Sarojini by the candle light. Sun subdued her. She talked in a milder tone. She effaced herself as much as possible, creating an atmosphere of freedom in which her guests could talk to each other; and she managed to do it with a sovereign grace, in the manner of a queen holding a court. She was no longer the satirist, but the humorist who measures the relative value of things. She would allow nothing to go so deep as to spoil her somewhat lazy enjoyment of the sun. If, the night before, she had been a destructive goddess, eating her fellow-gods and goddesses,

in the morning she was a serene majesty, who did not care to assert her rule at the cost of others.

Again, it was a completely different Sarojini who accompanied me on the few walks we had together to some place or other. She would then throw light on the lobby activities of Indian politics of 1935, for she was able to give a clear idea of the most intricate situations.

As an orator of the romantic type she stands almost supreme. It is worth while to go a long way to hear. Her technique combined with her poetic nature makes her performance remarkable. She is constantly speaking in public; inaugurating, commemorating, etc. She never prepares her speeches. To speak is as easy for her as it is for a fish to swim. I remember one occasion especially. It was in the Arabic-Union College, at the prize-giving for oratory.

We listened to six different youths, orators, who were telling us whether the States should be included or not in the New Constitution. When they had finished the judges retired to deliberate on the comparative merits of the speakers that they might allot the prizes. In their absence the student-audience became restive and somewhat noisy. She got up at once and spoke to quieten them down. Which she did.

She began in a low tone and used restrained imagery and everyday words. The tone rose gradually, adjectives became more and more colourful, and she ended on a brilliant climax. There was no hesitation in finding the words, or in constructing them into longish sentences. Her body rose with her edifice of words and images; so that, curiously enough, the short woman who had begun the speech became taller and taller as she reached the end. The fact that Sarojini actually stands on her toes at the end has nothing to do with it; that upward rise of the body is really parallel to an inward rise . . . it

is psychological rather than physical. Without remembering what she said I confess that I was as strongly moved as the youthful audience. And this gift of words and their magic use has been at the service of India's independence movement for over twenty years, electrifying audiences from one end of the country to the other, almost hypnotizing them into believing in a free India. As to the form that independence will take, and how Indian society must prepare for it, that is not necessarily the subject of her speeches. She is the earliest of the sowers of the seed, and without her modern India is inconceivable. And I can't think of her without remembering the lines from Shakespeare:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety.

At tea-time Sarojini is in the drawing-room with a feminine company belonging to all faiths and classes. In spite of the difference of costume one might meet some of those women in London or New York society. They discuss every subject under the sun. Many of them are interested in feminism; while there are others who do not think of India in terms of sex at all. They are mostly social-workers, teachers, club-women. Here are a few of these outstanding women:

Begam Shah-Navaz. Tall, handsome, she is good to look upon and good to listen to. The first impression is of a woman typical of those who attend international councils, feminist or otherwise. As a matter of fact she was the Muslem woman-delegate to the last London round-table conference. One can always get reliable information concerning her activities. She is a devout Muslem, but not a narrow one. She is, above all, a passionate nationalist. She believes Indian unity is only possible through its women. I still remember the bitterness with which her pretty lips curled as she told me of a con-

versation she had overheard on board ship while returning from London. "They were a group of Persians. Someone among them pointed at us and remarked: 'Here are some Indians.' A woman looked at us, or rather looked down at us, and said, 'Oh, that slave-nation!'" And she repeated it with tragic intensity, "Oh, that slave-nation!" One feels that Begam Shah Navaz's lovely black eyes will remain open after death if they do not behold a free India in their lifetime.

Here is Begam Rafi, another Muslem:

A shorter and darker version of Begam Shah-Navaz. An able interpreter with a perfect command of English. It is not only the words but their exact spirit she manages to interpret. Everything is sharply defined about her. A most active and unselfish woman, uncompromisingly honest in outlook. She is a member of every club in Delhi.

Here is Mrs. Rustomji, a Parsee lady:

Beautifully dressed. Looks very American. Behind the refinement and softness is something very reliable and hard. One divines at once that she would be capable of suffering and extreme sacrifice for what she believes in.

Here is Mrs. Asaf Ali:

A lovely Hindu woman married to a Muslem. Her activities go beyond and below her class. She is very young and has the realism of her contemporaries. I dare say her interest is more in social service centres and organizations than in high society. She reminds one of a swift young deer, moving in graceful leaps and bounds. It means choosing a hard path to marry out of your faith anywhere, but especially so in India. But bless her and her kind. Their lot is hard, yet they will break barriers and be bridges over yawning chasms. What passes from one side to the other is no light matter, but they are valiant and resistant.

Then there are women and girls who belong to Mahatma Gandhi's camp. He is on his annual visit to Delhi, surrounded by young people glowing with enthusiasm. They talk, and it is interesting to listen. Some have not altogether found their way. Is it to be exactly as Mahatma Gandhi had laid down . . . may they venture, oh just a little, out of the narrow path? Must it be only hand-made goods? May not machinery also be allowed? Those who have chosen their way have a less tortured look. They give one a sense of strength. There is a tall dark girl in a hand-made sari who attracts attention by the fire that burns in her black eyes. Her coming to see me is commented upon. She is the granddaughter of an Arya-Samaj leader who has been killed by Muslims in a religious riot. Hence the wonder at her coming to see a Muslim woman. I long to say, "You have done well, my dear. Your granddad, wherever he is now, will be pleased. Bury the hatchet; Muslim or Hindu, you are the children of the same land. United you stand, divided you fall. . . ."

In what little time I had to spare I visited the institutions and spoke at women's clubs. Lady Irwin College was the only one to which I could give ample time. Not that it is necessarily the most important, but it was the first of its kind. Lady Irwin must have been a charming and extremely able person. There is deep affection for her among Indian women.

The college specializes in domestic science. Besides the regular students there are also a considerable number of married women who attend special classes. It is an upper-middle-class institution and has an efficient mixed staff. The principal is a Parsee woman; and among the teachers are Americans and native Christians. It emphasizes dietetics. In that branch it reminded me of America. At the moment I did not realize the Indian significance of it.

After the inevitable speeches we went over the College and attended a fête given by Muslem girls. Not having come face to face with the kind of misery India is capable of showing, I enjoyed the lovely cakes without calculating the cost of each, and how many meals that would provide to a peasant family. After tea we enjoyed the programme. The Muslem girls recited poetry, and Hindus danced. Extraordinary picture dances! A slim Hindu maiden writhed and coiled, giving an exquisite representation of a cobra, the tuneful ring of the bells round her bare ankles accompanying the rhythm of her body. After the cobra dance, the bath dance. I know now how an Indian woman bathes. The slim dark arms moved dexterously, the hands poured water, while the body bent this way and that way to receive the water . . . and the rubbing and the scrubbing was done with delightfully light gestures.

I did not see the Lady Harding College, but I know the type it produces. It is a medical institution for women; and some of its students came to see me, and we talked at some length. They are Indian replicas of our own student girls. Efficient, realistic to a degree.

The first club I spoke to was composed of every class of women, Muslems in the minority. As there were no men present all Purdah women could have come, but they preferred to have their special day at their own club.

Hindu women also attend the entertainments given by the Purdah Club. The intermediary between myself and the Purdah Club was Begam Mohammad Ali, the widow of the great Muslem political leader and reformer. She has remained true to her husband's teachings, and is as definite a character as one may meet anywhere. To me she was of the type of those Turkish women of twenty-eight years ago who threw themselves into the service of their country, especially on the social

side. She will not be hustled. She wants change, but in her own good time. If Muslem women are to do things, they must do it without leaving the Purdah. She herself mixed with men, though she keeps her veil, which is that of a Turkish woman of 1908 of middle-class. In the lecture-hall of the Jamia there were two kinds of women's audiences: those who sat on the same benches with men, and those who sat behind a lattice or a thick curtain stretched at the side of the platform. She sat with neither. She sat alone on the platform in the background. She is neither with those who have surmounted the barriers, nor with those who have remained where they are. I believe her seat at these lectures was symptomatic of her whole attitude, and of her place in Modern India.

In facing the Purdah Club audience I was facing the Turkey of twenty-eight years ago. In dress they were not different from the emancipated clubs; but their expression differed. With the others one felt that they had decided to come out of Purdah, to be a part of the Indian nation in all its activities; and there were a great many professional women among them, which struck a very modern note. In the Purdah Club professional women were very few. These seemed as if they were still weighing the pros and cons of emancipation before taking the final step. But no face had the passive expression of the female reconciled to being carefully hidden away behind walls because of custom or male authority. If they were there, it was from their own inclination; at least they believed it to be so. "Is the complete abolition of Purdah good or evil?" they asked me, searching my face for an answer rather than listening to my words.

Individual members of this club contributed to charities, and they helped wherever they could. In the club their



activities were limited to weekly or monthly meetings, to giving entertainments, talking among themselves and then dispersing. Naturally tea with cakes and delicacies were served at each meeting. Outside the precincts of the club they took little interest. They were indifferent on the whole even to such Muslem institutions as the Jamia. What a centre for training women for social work the Jamia could have been if the Purdah women had given some time, money, and interest to it! An Indian woman said to me: "There is a great deal of social service going on. But it is mostly done in connection with the municipalities. The natives turned Christian are in the forefront; then come the Parsees, and then the Hindus, but very few Muslems take part." I thought of this remark, and also of the number of letters I had been receiving from Muslem Indian youth. The burden of them all was: "For God's sake speak against Purdah! It is this slavery of women which keeps us back. . . ." And they contained other details. But I did not mean to attack the Purdah of the older generation directly. I meant rather to plead for the younger generation, though they do not seem to need help.

I remember the strange way I was drawn to this audience. I also remember the fierceness with which I spoke, as brutally frank as one can be with one's kith and kin. All the time my mind was saying: "The half of this huge hall could be made into a working-room with hand-loom for women who have spare hours to come and work. The garden is big enough for them to bring little ones; and the members who have leisure could take turns in looking after the children. Plenty of the poor and half-naked women would welcome such occupation which, if it did not provide wages, would at least provide cloth to make into the dresses they so sorely need. On the terrace one could start a simple clinic where a woman doctor

could receive the poor and the sick who are still too conservative to go to the municipality clinics; and one could open a practical class on the care of the child. God knows how much ignorance there is in the East about the bringing up of children. And here where I am speaking they could have day and evening classes for adult women. There were enough college-bred Muslem girls to undertake the teaching. 'What do you mean,' I thought, 'by dressing so beautifully and sitting idle instead of helping, working, teaching. . . .' And all this costly food. . . . Why, they could calculate the weekly cost, and spend it on providing meals for the poorer students of Jamia. . . ."

Their native courtesy and the kinship of faith made them take my caustic talk very sweetly. They asked me for a photograph to hang on their wall. I gave them a special one with the grim look of a schoolteacher. I hope it continues telling them all that I could not say.



## CHAPTER IV

### “Raghuwar Tumko Meri Laj”

I WAS going to visit Mahatma Gandhi for the first time. To me he represented the Hindu of Hindus . . . the essence of the oldest India. Unconscious expectancy made me especially sensitive to my environment during that drive. First there was a halt at a small filling-station, where we met Professor Malkhani, the prominent Hindu worker and writer, and Joint General Secretary to the Association for the abolition of Untouchability. It was a happy and a useful meeting, for he kindly undertook my education in Hinduism at its present stage.

As the car proceeded between the trees along the king's road, I became conscious of the Indian sky as vividly as I had been on the boat. Half the blue vault above me was gold, the uniform glaze of a Persian illumination; the other half remained blue, with soft white masses of cloud floating in slow motion. Among the trees on our right a few half-naked figures flitted, carrying a corpse swathed in white, over their shoulders. A funeral procession of the poor. . . . Our car drew up in an open field where stood a two-storeyed stone building, flying the Congress flag.

The façade of the house was towards the other side, overlooking a vast field where, in the distance, fires were being lighted and figures in white were moving about. The fires were yet only wreaths of smoke curling upwards lazily. There was a spacious porch before the house into which all the rooms of the first floor opened, including that of Mahatma Gandhi. His was a large room with a concrete floor. In the corner facing the entrance were a mat, a floor cushion, and a

low desk, such as we used in old days in Turkey. Papers and books were on the desk and scattered over the cushion. Mahatma Gandhi was sitting on the cushion.

The face might be that of any Hindu, I thought. Yet it had none of the mystery and closed-in-ness of Hindu faces. Nothing could be more clear-cut and sharply defined than this triangular, dark, serene face. The mouth was large and toothless except for a single front tooth. The lips were closed over each other tightly, yet they did not give the impression of forbidding grimness or sunken old age. With the long nose, its tip curling over the lips, the mouth made one think its owner might be easily amused, and have a tendency to give and take jokes. As I saw it first, the face was very grave. The eyes were deep-set and clear and slightly drawn towards the narrow temples, somewhat in a Mongolic fashion. But the eye-folds were not Mongolic. They were distinctly Hindu, very tautly drawn towards the raised delicate eyebrows. As the face bent forward there appeared a baldish dome with a Hindu-lock, a tiny curl, on the top of it. It is a sacred habit of the Hindu, I believe; but in Anatolia men quite often leave such a lock on their shaven heads, though it has nothing to do with religion. The head in that bent position reminded me of a picture of Chingiz Khan. The same top curl, the bald head, and the delicate and narrow temples.

At the other corner was another mat where women sat huddled together. The emotional atmosphere in these corners differed as much as the equator and the poles. Over there the air was vibrant with emotion, so much so that some of the women had an almost stomach-achey expression on their faces. Here, where Mahatma Gandhi was sitting, the air was as cool and serene as a perfect autumn evening in the Mediterranean.

“He has a magnetic personality; everyone who comes in touch with him loses all capacity for clear judgment—everyone who knows him becomes too emotional to be trusted to be objective. . . .” I was told that by several people, including some English.

As I sat there I thought: “If people are carried away by emotion it must be that they are excitable, and in search for emotion instead of truth.” Mahatma Gandhi seemed to me the last person in the world to appeal to the emotional, to make any attempt to capture the fancy, or create fantasy and mystery around himself; though his religious nature is undeniable, and some of his talk may occasionally lead one to term him as a mystic. I had gone there with an honest determination to understand him and not to indulge in emotion; and I felt more than ever that I must not give way either to my former prejudice caused by the over-sensational European propaganda, or the sympathy and admiration his person inspired. He is so important a happening in twentieth-century history, I said to myself, that every witness must leave as objective and honest a report as is humanly possible.

As we talked his secretary, Mahadev Desai, took notes. He always takes notes. My conversations with Mahatma Gandhi, including this first one, are stored in my memory, and I will quote and discuss them as I proceed with my study of the Gandhian Movement. Meanwhile the secretary is too arresting a figure to miss, though he is a most self-effacing and modest man. He has almost no life separated from that of the Movement.

Mahadev Desai is a tall, spare man in the early forties. He has regular features, a tender mouth, and eyes which shine with mystic light. In spite of the mystical streak—which goes very deep—he is a man who can work methodically. He could

never accomplish the amount of work he does without organizing it carefully. Though of a strong, passionate nature, he has it under control. The devotion, the admiration, and the love he has for Mahatma Gandhi is religious. He is at the beck and call of his master at any moment. For sixteen years he has been body and soul one of the workers, and perhaps the intensest in the Gandhian Movement. This man from early youth had trod the narrow and difficult path of the austere ascetic life. He edits the *Harijan*, Mahatma's weekly paper. He does all the secretarial work and every other kind of work, including cleaning, dish-washing, etc. To be able to do only his intellectual job amid the perpetual *va-et-vient* of all India, of Europe, and even of America and the Far East, all of them hammering Mahatma Gandhi with questions, is more difficult than can be realized by those who are not given to intellectual occupations. It means a greater self-discipline than is easily imagined.

The door opened continually. Men in all sorts of costumes came in and fell on their faces at the fringe of the mat; then sat, their hands folded on their knees. I recognized some of the faces belonging to Congress members or to people in other leading positions, intellectual, spiritual, or otherwise. This sort of salute may appear to the Western eye as servile; but it is not. It is rather the Eastern reverence for those whom they believe to be spiritually great. The wonder of it was that it should survive a modern, a scientific, a materialistically Western education. It was evident that they had submerged themselves in Mahatma Gandhi's personality. That kind talked little. But there were others who came to consult him, or to have his blessings on some enterprise; and some came to tell him what they were going to do. The range of subjects on which he is consulted is infinite. It is almost inconceivable for

most of the Hindus and a considerable number of Muslems to do anything without his knowledge. This applies also to political life, though Mahatma Gandhi has retired from politics. Whether the general desire to consult Mahatma Gandhi is due to a mystical and spiritual adoration, or to a recognition of the excellence of his judgment, merely a habit of doing what the rest of the world does, it results in taking up an enormous amount of his time and energy. His economy of words, I often thought, was a reaction to being perpetually talked to.

As he had to receive an American reporter we left him and walked in the porch, waiting for the prayers in which we were to join.

A young Czech astronomer, Dr. Huer by name, stood on the steps, his face turned to the sky. Stars were playing hide-and-seek behind the moving white clouds. Indians stood below in their white draperies, listening while others moved to and fro. The astronomer's voice was husky with emotion; he spoke in a whisper but with an intensity that made it audible at a distance. His words were so clear, his tone so intent on conveying the meaning of his words, that he reminded me of a military commander giving orders for an attack. "Millions and millions . . . inconceivably long intervals, unutterably great distances . . . infinite numbers. . . ." He was trying to explain the spiritual forces through the imposing magnitude of time, space, and of the matter in the universe. I shall never forget the strange, tremulous hiss of his whispered words.

Meanwhile mats were being spread on the left. Men and women were walking towards the mats and then sitting in rows. Mothers brought their children, leading them by the hand or carrying them in their arms. Quite soon a crowd in



the form of a great horseshoe had gathered. At the open end of the horseshoe a few carpets had been placed. No more gold in the sky, but the dusk was velvety. The fires, which had been smoking, were now flames licking the dusk, while tiny groups of people appeared as white smudges against them. A gong sounded when I also was settled on a mat. Mahatma Gandhi descended the steps of the porch, and sat at the centre of the opening.

Children moved and whispered, mothers leaned over and tried to silence them. There was something contagious in the happiness of the little ones; they seemed more aware of what was happening than their elders. No wonder, for there was a childlike simplicity about the whole scene. Behind me a mother was feeding her baby at her breast. I could hear the cluck, cluck of the tiny throat as it swallowed. And the old pandit opposite was tuning his sitar. I could distinguish a few faces from Jamia. At the moment it was the atmosphere rather than the motionless figure of Mahatma Gandhi that took hold of the crowd. He was only a unit. Yet I watched him. By some freak of light, or rather because of the thinness of his shoulders, his draperies stood out both sides in sharp angles. Everything about him seemed to have fallen into a geometrical shape. Wrapt in that white mantle, his shoulders two sharp edges, his face immobile, he looked like Buddha.

"Raghuwar Tumko meri laj . . ." sang the pandit, accompanying with his sitar. The music of the strings trailed on, and the whole crowd, the whole place, even the man who looked like Buddha, dissolved in it. I had heard nothing like it in all my life. Beethoven at times reaches a height where one is no longer harassed by emotion, but aware only of a serene intellectuality. This tune not only lacks the disturbance of

emotion, but freed one from one's body. One really did rise above one's bodily existence without getting into a sweeping mystical rapture—of that there was none. One was given rest, and released from all worry, and from the consciousness of the accumulated trash of the past.

The tune is old and the words are equally so, being from Tulsidas, the Hindu mystic poet of the fifteenth century. As Mahadev Desai translated them to me, they sounded familiar. They are a prayer for redemption and reminiscent of our own mystics, though of two centuries earlier.

“O Raghuvara! Thy shame is my shame. I am ever seeking Thy protection and Thou art noted as the protector of the weak. I have heard it said of Thee that it is Thy promise that Thou wouldst save sinners. And I am an old sinner, take my ship ashore. . . .”

These words were not in keeping with the music. The tune relieves one of all longing, even for redemption. It goes better with the state of mind expressed by certain verses of the Gita recited also in the evening prayers:

The man who casts off all longing and walks without concern and free from the sense of “I” and “Mine” . . . he attains peace.

He in whom all longings subside, even as the waters subside in the ocean, which though ever being filled by them never overflows—that man finds peace. . . .

As long as the tune lasts one feels neither sinful nor conscious of any imperfection in one's self or in one's fellow creatures.

“Raghupati Rāghava RājāRama,” sang the pandit.

“Raghupati Rāghava RājāRama,” sang the crowd.

“Patita Pāvana Sitārāma,” sang the pandit.

“Patita Pāvana Sitārāma,” sang the crowd lustily. There were thick basses, contraltos, baby tremolos . . . men beat time on their knees or snapped their fingers, women swung their

bodies right and left, the whole thing was becoming swifter and livelier. "Jairam, jairam, jai jairam," sang the pandit. "Jairam, jairam, jai jairam," sang the congregation and ended suddenly.

The crowd rose with a rustle, women dragging their chattering babies, men adjusting their draperies. All were hurrying towards the steps of the porch where Mahatma Gandhi was trying to go up. But he was stopped by the surging crowd, specially by the women, who pushed their babies towards his feet, asking for his blessings, or perhaps asking him to heal some of their sick ones. We stood in the open. The moon came out from behind the clouds. The Jamia professors in their tightly buttoned coats and white Gandhi-caps were sharply outlined; the others in their draperies vaguely outlined. This perhaps is the fundamental difference between the Muslem and Hindu. Hinduism has a vague outline, so that it is difficult to say where it begins and where it ends; while Islam is sharply defined, compact. . . .

"Now, now, now . . ." was saying Mahatma Gandhi to the women, "you don't mean that . . ." trying all the time to prevent those who embraced his knees from kissing his feet. At least so it seemed to me from where I was. There were both friendliness and a slight chiding in his voice. He was amused, but also was perhaps scolding them for the incurable idolatry which abides in man's heart, strongest in that of the simple Hindu.

At these prayer meetings the crowd was of mixed faith. Before and after the prayers the individuality of each stood out, dominated always by the vaguely defined Hindu and the sharply defined Muslem. But when the pandit sang, the audience were seated together, they seemed to have no longer any differences, not even to the eye. I say:

“Let us eat together, sing together, and play together; but let us also pray together from time to time. It is the only time we lay down our arms against each other—strife really ceases when we pray. . . .”

Of this I felt sure in the field. Every evening it was the same gilded sky, the gold of which melted away slowly, the stars playing hide-and-seek between white clouds. In leaving we saw tongues of flame licking the darkness. The crowds hurrying away looked like tangible bits of the black air set in motion.



## CHAPTER V

### The Trio around Mahatma Gandhi

I SAW Sister Kasturbai (Mrs. Gandhi) for the first time. She was standing in the porch. Seen in profile, she was a tantalizing picture. One felt that this pleasing person was just ready to move away. But it was not an "attitude" taken consciously. That elusiveness like a young deer is common to all slim Hindu women. Though Sister Kasturbai's face is lined with years, she still retains her prettiness. The minute features are bewitching, and the frail little body has youthful movements. She is perhaps prettier now than she was, for her charm no longer depends on mere youth. The way that small mouth is pursed makes one think of a headstrong girl rather than of an old woman whose lips are sunken for lack of teeth.

If Mahatma Gandhi's eyes are slightly Mongolic hers are frankly Japanese. Indeed, her exquisite daintiness can only be matched by that of a Japanese terra-cotta statuette. Dressed in a hand-woven cotton sari, such as the poorest wear, she confers a special elegance to its folds. Living among those who aim at destroying everything which pleases the eye, or any of the other senses—her little person is a joy to see; and anyone who sees her for the first time must unconsciously long to stand between her and the world, her slightly bent shoulders have such an air of breakable fragility. Yet she has gone through hardships which would break the toughest. All that frailty and grace are external. She is of the stuff out of which loyal companions, lifelong fellow-sufferers are made. Knowing Sister Kasturbai makes one believe that the self-immolation of the widow which created the Suttee (the burning of widows)

must have been voluntary in some cases. It is impossible to imagine her existing without Mahatma Gandhi.

This woman has been a child-wife, a wife, a mother, and the only woman Mahatma Gandhi has loved in the flesh. The parts of his autobiography dealing with her are revealing of the deep and human significance of her in his life. "Brahmacharya" must have been difficult in all its aspects for a man who had this tantalizing little woman who could tempt the saintliest by her grace. All that, however, is of the past. He has broken the chains of the flesh, but he is all the more attached to her; and for her part, she continued to be what she was, a helper and a companion for life. . . . South African camps, prisons, Ashrams, hardships of all sorts . . . she undergoes them as willingly as the most devoted disciple. Yet she remains herself. She looks as if she would give in to no one's whims, even if they were those of a saint; and her service in the Gandhian Movement has none of the ideological and intellectual qualities which characterize his other disciples. She serves the cause because it means service.

Love and respect for her is unanimous throughout India. A Muslim Gandhist said to me: "She is the bravest woman I know: she stands up to him as no one else can—she always gives him her mind under any circumstances."

"But you can all do that," I said. "He listens with attention to everyone. Don't you always tell him what you think without fear?"

"True. But he is usually right—even when what he is doing seems illogical at the moment. Time has always proved his sagacity, and his uncanny insight into the human heart."

Of the trio who form the inner circle of the Mahatma's life—his secretary, his wife, and his adopted daughter—I also saw the last, Sister Miraben. "Who is she?" I asked myself,

then answered at once, "she must be a Hindu woman disciple." She was a barefooted, solid figure in a calico skirt and shirt, with a sleeveless hand-woven woollen vest, which she wore in the evenings. The finely proportioned structure of her body was arresting. She had the physique and the carriage of a cowboy. She also reminded me of some of our peasant women. Her walk had none of the flitting lightness of the Hindu. Her solid feet touched the earth as feet do when they are familiar with the earth and have no fear. But my prevailing impression could be summed up in a single sentence: "That woman means business." Whatever she does, whether it is social, educational, or religious, she would take it up with the efficiency and seriousness of a practical and capable person.

Mahadev Desai introduced her, and as soon as she spoke I realized that she was the Englishwoman everyone was talking about. Her language and the directness of her manner made me connect her with something outside the Hindu world. She had a low and very agreeable voice, and a dark face, the effect of the Indian sun, for she must have had a fair skin once. I liked the well-poised structure of her head; it was as powerful as that of her body. She had a square chin and a straight nose. Her large mouth remained in repose. The smile which touched it now and then was timid, hardly spoiling the repose of the features, though it leapt into her nut-brown eyes. Very brilliant those eyes, with the level thick black brows. On her shaven head she wore a calico veil, loosely framing her face. That more than anything else perhaps gave her the air of an Anatolian peasant.

I had talks with her on the roof, and she offered me fruit each time. I shall henceforth associate oranges and apples with Miraben. She sat on the edge of a mattress, a little uneasily, I thought. It was evident that sitting still, or talking about



herself, was not natural to her. What was there to tell about herself? Her story is known to the world. She was the daughter of an English admiral—Slade, by name, and was evidently brought up in highly fashionable surroundings.

"I never felt at home there," she says.

How could she? The leisured ones, the devotees of pleasure, are the most pitiful of human beings I have come across. To concentrate only on pleasures seems quite as bad as to concentrate only on pain. Suffering, though it can warp a nature, may also enliven and ennoble. But the constant search for pleasure dulls, even degrades. The devotee of pleasure—Roman, Assyrian, or modern—is condemned to the same insufferable fate: vice and boredom. This woman was too much alive to sink into that sort of life.

"I hated society," she said. "I never accepted invitations for parties. I loved horses and dogs, and music, which I believe appealed to the spiritual side of me. And the state of the world was an agony to me. There was a perpetual restlessness in me. You see, I have a gipsy-ancestor, a Hungarian woman who was married to my great-great-grandfather. . . . She may have been the cause. . . ."

But to know the cause of one's ill was no cure. She wanted to get away but did not know how. While living in Paris she had read Romain Rolland's book on Mahatma Gandhi; then she had written to him proposing to join him. His reply put her on trial. She must prepare herself for the difficult way of life she wanted to take up. She must train her spirit as well as her body. She did both. She gave up smoking, meat, alcohol, and other habits which must have been even harder to break. At the end of the year she was ready. And here she is, and has been for nearly ten years, leading the austere sort of ascetic life. Her eyes embraced the open spaces.

"I have at last come home," she said.

Is she a Christian or a Hindu? Was she ever religious? She must have been, but never in a denominational sense. The urge which has led her from an artificially heated drawing-room to the open spaces of India is decidedly spiritual. But it is from Mahatma Gandhi that she has imbibed the essential spirit of religion: there are no religions, there is only religion. You take the road of one of them, that which is most congenial to you, or the one in which you are brought up to believe. Hinduism regulates action, but leaves the mind free. It was so a thousand years ago when Alberuni wrote about it. It is still so. Miraben, whether she calls herself a Christian or not, is unconsciously fitting herself into the new mould, she is casting away all her old habits just as she has cast off her shoes—the last signs of the artificial and complicated civilization she has left behind.

Those who know her intimately call her a Hindu of Hindus. I am one of those. But to those who look at Hinduism as a labyrinth of castes and believe that only *birth* can make one a Hindu, she is a stranger. Her services in Mahatma Gandhi's camp are of the most varied kind. This spiritually adopted offspring and disciple of the Great Hindu leader milks the goats, cleans, washes dishes, teaches, writes. . . . I called her a great woman in those days. Further contacts of a more intimate nature have convinced me of the fact.



## CHAPTER VI

### Concerning Mahatma Gandhi's Activities

MAHATMA GANDHI's activities are manifold. But the aim to build Indian Society from the bottom to the top dominates it all. His actual work comprises: the abolition of Untouchability, the regeneration of the village as a unit of Indian society, and achievement of communal unity.

To regenerate the villages means a vast economic undertaking. We say in Turkish, "The hungry bear does not dance." I do not suppose the hungry villager will ever care to change. Hence the importance of restoring industry to the villages. Nationalization in Indian economics, Gandhian objection to machine-made and imported goods spring from this. The discussions on the subject of making everything in India by Indians for Indians are yet premature. Meanwhile I want to describe our visit with Mahatma Gandhi to certain of the villages. It was my first inner glimpse of them.

He was to leave Delhi in a few days; and was making a farewell visit to some of the villages, a considerable number of his household going with him. He kindly invited me to go as well. We drove to something like a mile's distance from the villages, and then walked. I was in Mahatma Gandhi's car. Mahadev Desai had arranged cushions around him and covered him up. He sat in his corner looking unbelievably frail. The talk we had in the car, at least some of it, covered these points:

There are Hindus (most of them in fact) who believe Caste, and, above all, Untouchability to be essential to Hinduism. Did Mahatma Gandhi think the old Hindu Scriptures would permit an abolition of Caste and Untouchability? For the

Orthodox Hindu considers all movements to abolish them as having been due to the influence of Islam and Christianity.

His pronouncement about Caste was not definite. But his condemnation on Untouchability was both clear and emphatic. If Hinduism is to survive, Untouchability must go. And he certainly believed that there were sanctions in the Gita for the abolition of Untouchability. The Gita contains all the teachings of the Vedas in a clear synthesis, he says. The Gita with its seven hundred verses forms his guide. It contains, he says, all the essentials one can find in other great world religions, for he has studied them seriously. As a matter of fact, Hinduism is not based on a single prophet's teachings, nor a single book. Its books are innumerable, and they have been produced at different periods, each series synthetizing the past, and making some adaptation to new considerations. It is this assimilating and unifying force of Hinduism which has made it survive in spite of its externals. And in this sense (that is, accepting the necessity of change, and making change emanate from within) Mahatma Gandhi is a greater and more real Hindu than those Orthodox Hindus who criticize him. I could not, of course, doubt his interpretation of the Gita as sanctioning the abolition of Untouchability. But I wanted to know whether he would have stood for the abolition of this curse *if there had been* no sanctions. Decidedly yes. His view of Untouchability is well described by the following lines from his book *My Soul's Agony*:

Socially they are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall "Houses of God." They are denied the use, on the same terms as Caste Hindus, of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells. . . . In some cases to approach nearer than a given distance is a social crime. . . . Caste lawyers and doctors will not serve them as they do other members of Society.

As he takes Untouchability to be a purely Hindu sin, he wants the Hindus to abolish it and to do so as a reparation. He has set out to change the mind of the Caste Hindu on this point, saying all the time that if Untouchability must stay, then Hinduism must go. This is the strongest argument, which makes even the unchanged in heart among the Hindus favour Mahatma Gandhi's Untouchability reforms, or at least desist from opposition.

Yet the obstruction is not only from the Caste Hindu. The Untouchables themselves object. I reason it out this way. However much an Untouchable is sensitive to his disabilities outside his community, within his community he has taken his roots. He has a definite way of life with particular moral and material boundaries. The sense of belonging to some definite group—no matter what it is called—gives a sense of security not unmixed with vanity. Even criminals—if they are rigidly labelled—begin to feel a class solidarity, even pride. What is an Untouchable when he ceases to belong to his group? A Hindu? But there is no such thing as a simple Hindu. He must belong to some definite Caste. All of them belong to definite Castes with definite limitations. This idea of being a Hindu pure and simple is almost inconceivable to the masses. Therefore to an outsider like myself it seems that it would be wellnigh impossible to do away with Untouchability unless Caste as a system is also destroyed. However, Mahatma Gandhi thinks that the breaking down of Caste must begin with Untouchability. In *My Soul's Agony* he gives a clear idea of his objective when he says:

Untouchability has gone far beyond its prescribed limits and sapped the foundations of the whole nation. The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If, therefore, this white ant is touched at its sources, I feel sure that we should soon forget the

difference between caste and caste, and religion and religion; and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are all Moslems, Sikhs, Jews and Christians branches of the same parent-tree. . . .

This touch-me-not spirit is unfortunately so strong a reality that, though the idea of doing away with Untouchability is very old, and has been the principal demand of all reforming parties, nothing has been accomplished of a radical nature. Arya-Samaj has done the most; but it has had a separatist influence. It has only attached a new label to the Untouchable. He passed from one fold to another with an equally definite set of limitations. Reforms, when effective, *have been merely reshuffling of castes, forming new combinations*: and each combination has in turn become as rigid as were the old castes. Mahatma Gandhi is original on the question of Untouchability by insisting that when an Untouchable is no longer untouchable he is a Hindu pure and simple.

There are certainly other reasons for forty millions of people to remain as Untouchable. Take the advent of Islam in India. They could have all become Muslems and thereby not only lose their disabilities, but have lorded it over their oppressors. It was the same when the English came to India. The activities of the Christian Missionaries have never ceased. The Untouchables could have all accepted Christianity, the religion of the ruling class. Yet the number of converts to Islam or Christianity is inconsiderable. Nothing, I believe, shows more clearly what a reality religion is in a man's life. Men, or at least the majority, do not care to exchange religion for privilege.

There is another, probably a very strong one. There are subdivisions of Untouchability within the large group itself. However low in the social scale an Untouchable may be—compared to a Caste Hindu—within his own caste he has the

privilege of calling somebody else an Untouchable, and feeling superior to him. If he turns Christian or Muslem he will have no one to look down on. And it is a human weakness to want to be top-dog to someone, no matter how degraded the under-dog may be.

When we have left the cars we had to cross some very arid ground. Already villagers in groups were arriving, shouting: "Gandhiji-Ki-jai!" ("Live Mr. Gandhi"). As the crowd thickened the elders of the village, and the workers (young men and women) held hands and kept the crowd from approaching too near.

The dust was indescribable, and the young people who offered their arms or shoulders to Mahatma Gandhi to lean on were flushed; sweat streaming down the faces of the crowd, and the sun beating down from high overhead. The light of the sun was gilding the dust particles into myriads of floating atoms of gold; but the taste of the dust in the mouth is not very pleasant. The only person who appeared cool and fresh, and bore the march well was the frail old man who went along steadily, keeping the same pace, and joking with the peasants. He has a strange even swing which makes of his walk something unique. The crowd increased as we progressed, and the shouts of "Gandhiji-Ki-jai" gained in volume.

When I first entered the villages I thought that the talk about the indescribable poverty and misery of Indian villages was a little overdone. The narrow, dirty streets and the gloomy, dark interiors are common to most villages in the East. True, the cattle were scanty and looked somewhat underfed, but even men look like that in India. To-day one was agreeably affected by the festive air, by the enthusiasm



and happiness which lighted even the eyes of the oldest, with sunken cheeks and weak, tottering bodies.

"Are they Harijan (Untouchable) villages?"

"No, but there are Harijan quarters."

"So they mix here?"

"That is what the village workers who come to live in these villages try to do. They try to teach, I don't mean only in school, but in other ways too. In quite a number of the villages the wells, tanks, and even the temples are used by all. Yes, they are mixing."

I understood that entrance to the temples was the hardest to achieve. For the law favoured the Hindu Caste. If the Hindus were not unanimous in allowing Harijans to enter the temple, the Harijans could not enter.

Mahatma Gandhi rested on the terrace of one of the houses which was built in a quadrangle. He faced the crowd below, the front rows of which were children. But he was talking to someone near him who looked extremely crestfallen, though Mahatma Gandhi's tones were even.

"What makes that man look so miserable?" I asked my companion.

"He is scolding an Arya-Samaj preacher."

"Why?"

"Because the man has been sowing the seed of disorder among the villagers."

After he had addressed people they brought him samples of their handiwork; cloth of all sorts, mats, leather work, etc. Then he inspected their workshops which opened on to the quadrangle. Everything was tolerably clean, considering how little water there is in villages. I thought he would linger over looms and spinning wheels, but I was mistaken. He gave his greatest attention to tanning. That was entirely a Harijan work.

Meanwhile I walked into the open and tried to establish contact with a group of veiled women who remained in a corner. They were all Hindus. They were the only ones among the Hindus who seemed so particular about their veils, at least of those I met. They would lift the veil for a moment, but one hardly got a glimpse of their faces before they dropped it again. One of the veils thus lifted disclosed a flash of eyes, teeth, skin that looked like a newly-ripened exquisite mango, laughter that rippled over the pretty features, and all framed in the richest orange, red and yellow of her draperies. But I was soon called away. I left the scene reluctantly. And at first I had to make an effort to listen to the reason why Mahatma Gandhi put such importance on the revival of tannery. My companion explained it in this way.

Untouchability has many reasons for its existence. The Aryan conquerors established it to preserve race purity. Probably the colour of the aborigines being darker than that of the newcomers had something to do with it; in the same way as the American of the South explains his anti-negroism as a struggle to keep the white race pure. Then the Hindu Brahman had the monopoly of learning and spiritual purity. Being very particular about bodily contact which they believe to affect the soul, they had to keep the aborigines separate. Diet has a great deal to do with spirituality too. The Brahman is a vegetarian, while the Untouchable does not only eat meat but carrion as well. Professor Malkani said to me once: "Buddhism laughed at the Brahmanic pride in birth and learning, but introduced a new pride based on occupation. All occupations connected with slaughtered animals came to be regarded as unclean. So all leather workers, hunters, butchers, fisherman, who were of low caste, already became Untouchables."

The diet question we will leave out here. But among all occupations two were considered the most degrading: tanning and scavenging. The latter includes the cleaning of water-closets, the removal of all excreta being the work of Harijans; and as the greater part of India has no drains, this means perhaps the most important and necessary of all labour. Anyone who undertakes this execrable but indispensable work should be sainted, but the contrary has happened: it is the deepest degradation to be a scavenger. Next comes tannery.

Though the Harijans have kept to scavenging they have dropped tannery, which used to be one of the most remunerative of arts and crafts, with considerable export and home consumption. Dropping it has meant the loss of livelihood to thousands of Untouchables, and has impoverished India. Mahatma Gandhi by paying special attention to the revival of tannery was helping India and the Untouchables at the same time. To him no work is unclean. Every kind of work which an Untouchable does Mahatma Gandhi himself can do, and has done with efficiency too. To me as a Muslem this aspect of Gandhism, in restoring the dignity and sanctity of all labour, is perhaps the most admirable. For the Islamic conception of labour, I believe, is and will always be up-to-date. "Man is man because of his labour."

What I cannot understand is why the Untouchables have not given up scavenging instead of tanning. It seems to me that, if there had been Untouchable leaders with some organizing power, Untouchability would have been abolished long ago. "How?" asked an Indian. I answered: "Supposing the millions and millions of Untouchables who clean the dirt of three hundred millions said, "Gentlemen, clean your own dirt, we won't touch it any more," and had carried out their threat. Such a totalitarian strike would have left the Caste-

Hindus with two alternatives. Either to remove their own excreta which would have outcasted them at once and turned them all into Untouchables. Or, to live amid piles and piles of unmentionable filth, which would have been unthinkable. The other possibility, that of having drainage for all India, would have taken too long a time to bring relief."

Said my Indian friend: "On what would the Harijans have lived while this totalitarian strike lasted?"

"It couldn't have lasted long: the Caste-Hindus would have capitulated at once. Besides, the other Untouchables, the butchers, the tanners, the fishermen, could have supplied the scavengers with food. After all, a week of fasting in such a cause would have been worth while. Think of the Untouchables seeing the sanctimonious Caste-Hindu handling his own abomination."

"But," says my friend, who is a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, "that would have meant bullying and bargaining: we mustn't do that."

"But," said I, "isn't non-co-operation something like it? If one can obtain one's rights, one's human dignity in no other way, non-co-operation is a far better method than an armed rising?"

However, in these villages at least, the self-sacrificing and valiant Hindu workers have accomplished the mixing of Untouchables with the rest of the world. When Mahatma Gandhi himself handles hides and talks to the Harijan worker, giving him advice, the work can no longer be a degraded thing.

At last we rested on a village common, very spacious and crowded with villagers from the district. In the middle was a mound of earth and dung. The whole place was enveloped in a cloud of dust. But Mahatma Gandhi sat on the mound

and talked to them all, looking cool and fit. After that we followed him in his inspection of a village school. It was a windowless, dark room, filled with little children. Some of them showed their books to Mahatma Gandhi, and he talked to them. They were hand-made books. The scene made me think of the indescribable poverty and inadequacy of primary education compared to the limitless riches of the Universities. I remembered now the luxurious green lawns, professors walking in scholarly robes, and the students who, except for complexion, were not different from those in any English University. The Universities have helped India and still do, of course. But how much worthier of praise seemed the gallant Hindu workers who were struggling in these dark holes, struggling to educate the peasant child amid the direst misery and lack of means. The little book, composed of a few soiled sheets sewn together, and written by hand, had an almost sacred significance. I couldn't help asking myself the question which was always in my mind: "What sort of India had there been if the English had spent all their energy on the uplift of the peasant, instead of heaping the benefits (as well as the curses) of Westernization on the higher middle-class and the ruling families?"

## CHAPTER VII

### Concerning Chairmen at Jamia Lectures

EIGHT personalities have presided over my lectures at Jamia. Four of them were Hindus and four Muslims. Brief sketches of them may throw light on the Indian scene. Of Sarojini Naidu I have already spoken. Of Mahatma Gandhi I will speak again, for his presence at Jamia at that memorable evening stands out very vividly in my mind.

Mahatma Gandhi sat on a cushion, surrounded with charcoal braziers, for the night was cold. Eyes from the packed crowd in the hall and eyes from the packed crowd on the spacious platform were riveted on him. The atmosphere vibrated with a mixture of profound affection and mystic fervour. And the fragile figure was more like Buddha than ever. Though I was delivering a speech on a historic phase of a distant country, I was conscious of a distinct line of thought which had nothing to do with what I was saying. I was thinking about the quality of Mahatma Gandhi's greatness.

Greatness that takes hold of the mass imagination and fixes it in history is the same all over the world, and in all periods. The great man is invariably a thousand times enlarged portrait of the average man. The quality of the great differs according to the mood, thought and temperament of the ordinary man that the great man represents. There are the Napoleonic types . . . those who stamp their ego on the masses and lead them to death. It is because the type is an aggrandized expression of the love of power, the ambition and the cruelty which abide in the heart of the ordinary man, that such a type can hypnotize the world. But the Napoleonic type must be

invested with the insignia of high rank. Either crowns, thrones and what-nots, or oblivion. They cannot afford to lose the gold trappings, they cannot live like ordinary men. The moment the great are shorn of the emblems of power, men abandon them and transfer their allegiance to the next gilded and aggrandized expression of themselves: "The King is dead, long live the King!"

But no matter how simple the ordinary man is, he is also incalculable and has contradictory aspirations. Side by side with his extreme egotism, bloodthirstiness, and cupidity, there is also his love, his pity for the suffering and his desire to serve and to better the destiny of his fellow-creatures. The alternative great man, who also represents an aggrandized type of the ordinary man, is Buddha, Christ . . . and to those belongs Mahatma Gandhi. But they belong to such a remote past that one wonders whether they were ever alive on earth. No one in our age, or since the days of saints and prophets, has taken the fancy of the masses, because of his resemblance to the good, to the loving kindness of the ordinary man. Does Mahatma Gandhi mean the opening of a new era? Otherwise why should he be so much loved by millions, and revered by the Intelligentsia of this materialistic world of ours? For the moment Mahatma Gandhi revived my faith in the infallibility of the better nature of Man. Not only Gandhi, but the Indian masses who take sides with this ancient type of leader who represents love, seemed to me worthy of the world's gratitude. For in following Mahatma Gandhi the Indian has no hope of worldly reward. On the contrary he is often persecuted for it. In the hall that night there was a sense of fraternity and friendliness: the feeble old man had turned the light on the human qualities of us all without which we must all perish.

"Those who die in utter distress and suffering are the real heroes and heroines of the world," he said, after the lecture. "No birth comes without agony. Whatever we see to-day is in the melting-pot, transitory in this transitory world. What will happen in this world in which India and Turkey are only little spots? From the lecture I believe that if we model our action according to what is right, there is a bright future for Turkey and India. . . ." This was his tribute to the simple folk of Turkey who had given their lives unconditionally for the sake of freedom in Turkey some eighteen years ago. But he also, with the directness which characterizes all his words and actions, spoke of Muslem-Hindu unity. "Our brethren, the bone of our bones . . ." he was saying: "her coming to India may result in tying us with an indissoluble tie." No one could aspire to a greater honour in this world. But alas, I know that this unity depends only on the Hindu and Muslem youth of India.

Dr. Bhagavan Das was the next Hindu chairman. He is a tall willowy figure, with long white hair and beard. The pallor and the delicacy of his features stamp him as a man with the habit of long fasts, not only in the material sense either. From under his brooding lids his eyes look far away into something seen only by himself. Whether he is talking or listening, one has the feeling that he is all the time communing with an invisible presence; and the expression of his face changes accordingly. It would be almost uncanny to anyone who has had no contact with mystics. Whether mystical experience is a reality or self-hypnotism, the mystics certainly have an extra sense.

Dr. Bhagavan Das does not belong to that Indian type of mystics who discard clothes, cut themselves away from all contact, and concentrate on the spiritual. He is one of the



most elegant figures I have come across. Flowing white robes, white shoes, always immaculate, a white turban and a cashmere muffler negligently thrown round his neck, he might very well be a Turkish Sheikh stepping out of one of those old monasteries of ours which have now been abolished. As a matter of fact he is curiously like a Near-Eastern mystic. His mind has a thousand windows open to all knowledge, no matter from where it comes. He is an accomplished scholar of Arabic and Persian as well as of Indian and Chinese. He is as much at home quoting the Koran or the Mesnevi, as he is quoting Hindu Scriptures.

All this astoundingly varied knowledge (he is a keen student of scientific knowledge, too) revolves round religion, of a mystical nature of course. Speaking of politics, he says, that divorced from religion it will lose its human quality, just as religion would mean nothing if it did not influence man's actions. And he had written quite a number of books on the subject. There are no religions for him: there is only Religion. His mission is to prove it. *The Essential Unity of all Religions*, one of his scholarly achievements, is full of interesting data on this favourite subject of his.

His type is not that of a violent reformer, or even of a man of action. But his writings, his conversation and personality is leavening mankind with kindness and fraternal instincts. All sorts make a world. His sort may not always catch the public eye. But it is as essential as others.

I had already written *The Clown and his Daughter* when I visited India. But Dr. Bhagavan Das seemed to me the Indian equivalent of "Vehbi Effendi," the Turkish mystic in the novel. And Vehbi Effendi was a sketch, not of any particular one, but of several Dervishes I had known in the early days of my youth.

Dr. Bhagavan Das was a member of the Indian Congress. He sat on one of its benches, next to Bhulabhai Desai, then the President of the Congress Party in the Indian Parliament. Bhulabhai Desai was the last Hindu who presided over a lecture of mine.

Bhulabhai Desai was spoken of as one of the brilliant lawyers of Bombay, earning high honorariums. He was a newcomer to politics, nevertheless he had at once become the President of the Party. It may have been partly due to the political mood of 1935 which was moderate, but undoubtedly his abilities had a lot to do with the choice. But my interest in him was due to something rather trivial. Bhai is both a suffix and a prefix used in some old Turkish names. He, I imagined, must look like a legendary character, and the first time I met him I asked:

“What does your name signify?”

“‘The boy who remained.’ My parents lost all their children before me, and when I was born they named me so. . . .”

“So you are ‘Durmush,’” I said. In Anatolia parents who lose their children name the latecomer “Durmush,” which also means “the boy who remained.”

Apart from his name, the manner of the man also made me associate him with an Anatolian at his best. He had a great sense of proportion, and an unusual ability to separate the essential from the trivial. He was not a man of many words, but when he did speak he could be both clear and outspoken, yet retain an unconscious courtesy towards his opponents.

He wore a Gandhi-cap and a tightly buttoned coat of a nondescript colour. Flowing white Hindu draperies would have marked him as an extreme nationalist, European clothes as a super-Westernized man, which in India also means an imitator. In his case, the attire marked the man. He was not

to be associated with any passing fashion or movement. He was an Indian of all times.

Nature itself has stamped this unobtrusiveness on his small features. The mild and friendly eyes have colourless lashes. He is altogether a man who shrinks from public attention, but not deliberately though, for to go out of one's way to escape attention is only a clever way of courting it. He has a typically Anatolian voice. That is difficult to describe beyond saying that it is low and even, never rises or falls, and that no gestures accompany his words. The moderation both of his tone as well as his thoughts gave him an unconscious dignity. One thought of him as a member of an independent race to whom it is natural to be so; and if he lost it he would still retain that inner poise which marks the really free.

So seemed Bhulabhai Desai to me. Though I had so far kept away from the Indian Parliament, because political controversy does not interest me very much when it is meant for the gallery, I went there to hear him speak.

Although there was nothing to account for it in the Assembly, I was thinking of Westminster. I could not very well explain why the shadow of the House of Commons hovers over this very Indianized monument—maybe it was the first expression of Indian Democracy. A friend has said to me in regard to it, "Not a Parliament, only a puppet-show; dolls with springs behind their backs mimic a Parliament according to the whims of those who pull the strings."

But after I was seated in the Visitors' gallery, and had seen and heard the proceedings, I came to the conclusion that it was no longer a puppet-show, though there was still a good deal of acting. The members were self-conscious, I thought. They were indeed like actors in giving a representation with artistic effect of the procedure of the British Parliament.

The Speaker in his wig and gown, the Government benches occupied by men in grey suits, the Congress benches opposite, the minorities all round in all sorts of costumes. . . . All the niceties of English Parliamentary speech . . . the honourable gentleman this, the honourable gentleman that. . . .

This well-lighted circular hall was very different, with its picturesque inmates, from the sombre House of Commons and its drab but virile inhabitants; yet it did seem like a ghost of Westminster. It lacked reality and I lost interest in it and began to watch the attendants in their crimson tunics and turbans. They moved noiselessly about, with overdone obsequiousness, bowing, kneeling by the desks where they deposited papers. If the Parliament were even only a show, the attendants were marring the effect by acting as if they were in a Rajah's palace, rather than in a democratic institution. They brought an air of servility, an *ingrained sense of inequality*, which did not suit the atmosphere at all. Democracy after all rests on the shoulders and the unbendable backbones of the masses, and not in the manner and the constitutional learning of its *Intelligentzia*.

A red uniform bowed and knelt, placing a paper on a desk opposite. A grey indistinct figure rose to speak. It was Bhulabhai Desai. He was going to give the view of the Congress Party in regard to the new Constitution.

It does not matter here what he said. But he said it in a way which any Parliament in the world would like to have its speakers state the policy of their parties. He presented the Indian view with his habitual moderation and clarity, the main issues standing out, unadorned but in massive and sound structure. None of the politician's demagogic embellishments, none of the lawyer's tricks of logic and legal subtleties. His style was as effective as his facts. Of the new school of speaking

of which Mahatma Gandhi is a supreme model, Bhulabhai Desai is an admirable example. The Indians call it "Chaste English."

"He has understated our case," said an Indian near me. No; he had not. The Indian case has been so often overstated that it gains by understatement. Shorn of oratorical and rhetorical effects, it stands out in its poignant reality. Further, Bhulabhai Desai proved himself to have real psychological insight by the choice of that moderate and dignified style. For the speech was meant for the British rulers. As such the tone was right. Neither the old-fashioned flattery, nor the new-fashioned bluster, not even the poetic appeal. For the Indian the old-fashioned flattery means nothing more than good manners. But to the English it means servility, lack of backbone. I can well imagine an Englishman's toes itching to kick an old-fashioned Oriental using the flowery form of address. The new-fashioned bluster is to the Indian an expression of his newly acquired self-confidence. But again the English resent it, taking over-expression as a sign of weakness. As for poetical expression, though the English have produced the greatest poetry in the world, they enjoy it only in privacy, and never allow it to colour their realistic outlook in politics.

Bhulabhai Desai made another speech a few days later, this time to the students of Lucknow University. As I read this much-commented upon address I realized that he knew the exact tone which would appeal to the student. He had called his address "The Failure of the Intellectuals." What he said about the Indian intellectual sounded true of the greater number of intellectuals elsewhere. They fail because they give only lip service to ideas which ought to be motives of action.

He began by evoking the matchless ancient civilization of

India. Why had it survived when all the contemporary civilizations had passed away; was it merely to be the example of a phenomenon to show the world how the fifth part of the human race could live under subjection? And pointing to the number of intellectuals, artists, and scientists of Modern India, he wondered what relation they had to the people.

"There was a time, and I am afraid it is still with us, when in our Universities and Colleges most of our young men and women are proud of gaining distinction for being able to describe and admire the struggles of other races for freedom. . . .

"Many a young man and woman here would be able to recite with a considerable amount of zest poems of British poets saying what freedom means, not omitting Byron's *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

"Nor is it merely appreciation. We feel actual personal emotion when we read the history of those who struggled and suffered in the cause of freedom. But have we yet arrived at the point when those of us who *intellectually admire* and discuss that which led to freedom and progress for others should ask ourselves at what stage in human history our own country stands?"

He answered his own question with the bitterest figure of speech I have heard from an Indian patriot: "It is true, is it not, that if you count the number of men from a foreign land who govern you (and it is no offence to say this, but good for you to realize it), to herd as many cattle more herdsmen would be required than the number of those who govern the 330 millions of this land?"

Every line of the speech bore witness to the permeating influence of English thought on the Indian mind. I asked Mahatma Gandhi:

"What is the greatest contribution of the English to India?"

He answered without hesitation:

"Nationhood."

I put the question to Sarojini Naidu in a slightly different form. We were sitting on the terrace of Humayun's tomb. Below a procession of villagers was passing carrying coloured banners. She had taken off her shoes and was warming her bare toes in the sun, while looking with genuine pleasure at the façade of the stately royal tomb.

"I know what the Muslims have contributed to India. But what will the English leave behind, if and when they leave?"

"A nation," she answered, also without hesitation.

Of the four Muslims who presided over lectures of mine, I have already spoken of Dr. Ansari. Maulana Shaukat Ali comes next.

He is the late Mohammad Ali's brother, and has been a supporter of the Khilafat movement, Hindu-Muslim co-operation, and the Indian Nationalism. But these things belong to the past, as far as he is concerned. I find it difficult to define his present political position. The failure of the Khilafat movement has made him lose his bearings, I think. But, apart from his politics, he is a significant and very sympathetic figure. He has been one of the public speakers who has had a very great effect on the masses. He has wit and emotional appeal. He has also the physique which would dominate any public gathering. He is a very big man in every sense, and this has been responsible for his nickname, "Big Brother." He has a flowing beard, a shock of picturesque grey hair, and eyes which twinkle like those of a mischievous boy. His dress is suggestive of the vagueness of his politics. He wears a long shirt over tight Indian trousers and leggings; and a loose

Arab Mashlak (mantle) with a Turkish Kalpak (fur cap) in the fashion of about sixteen years ago. His attire is reminiscent of a combination of Indian, Muslem, Arab and Turk; in a word, it is a reflection of Pan-Islamism, which though lacking political reality will, I believe, never die out entirely.

Maulana Shaukat Ali has a young and pretty English wife. In caricatures he is represented as a big baby to whom the King gives a pretty doll so as to keep him quiet. There are always stories about his quick retorts. The last was this:

A highly placed English official said to him in regard to his wife: "I hear that you bully your wife." Shaukat Ali answered, looking at the wife of the Englishman: "Your Excellency is in a position to know which bullies which."

I must also say something about Maulana Sulaiman Nadvi. He is small and dressed like a learned Muslem. If one were to describe his mental and physical characteristics with a single adjective, neat would do to perfection. He has the lean, pale face of an ascetic; and black eyes which are usually bent over his folded hands. Yet that he has a sense of humour is written all over him. Moderation dominates all he has to say, and also clarity and honesty of thought. His position is definite in politics as well as in the thought of India. His speeches, always in Urdu, have a great effect on his audience. But his appeal is more to the educated than to the masses, for he is opposed to the extravagance of style of the native orators. He likens them to the hired mourners in the month of Muharrem.<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Sulaiman Nadvi came into prominence during the Islamic renaissance led by Sir Saiyid Ahmad, the founder of Aligarh College. The College was founded about the

<sup>1</sup> Hasan and Husein, the grandsons of the Prophet, were martyred at Kerbela in the month of Muharrem. It is the month of mourning for Muslems and is specially celebrated by the Muslems of Shia sect by a kind of Passion-Play. Mourners are hired for the occasion to mourn and wail.



middle of the last century, but round Sir Saiyid Ahmad Muslems continued to produce a series of outstanding men of thought and learning. Maulana Sulaiman Nadivi, a man who looks about sixty now, must have been among the youngest members of the movement in 1898 when Sir Saiyid Ahmad died. But unlike his leader he has gone beyond Islamic boundaries in politics. Though advocate of cultural understanding among the Muslems of the world, and once a staunch supporter of the Khilafat Movement, he is also a nationalist and supports Hindu-Muslim co-operation.

Intellectually his standing is even more important. *The Life of Mahomet*, which he wrote in collaboration with Shibly, the distinguished Muslem scholar, who has since died, is translated into Turkish and Persian. At the moment he is a prominent member of the movement in Lucknow known as Nadwatil-Ulema, an attempt to bring religious education into touch with modern life.

His attitude of mind with regard to reform is not different from that of the Hindu reformers. Islamic scriptures have all the necessary sanctions for adapting life to change. He goes even further than other Muslem thinkers and admits the separation of Church and State in Islam. But, he says, it must be brought about by the sanctions of an inter-Islamic body, and not carried through by a single Muslem nation.

I would now conclude my sketches of influential Muslems with a few words about Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the great poet and thinker. Descended from Brahmanic ancestors, yet remaining an Orthodox Muslem, his hobby is intellectual speculation. A serious scholar of philosophy, he has written on every conceivable subject touching Indian thought.

"In politics," said an Indian intellectual, "Sir Iqbal has passed through several phases." The earliest was Nationalism,

pure and simple, interpreted as a religion in itself. *The New Temple* expresses this phase:

Shall I tell thee the truth, oh Brahman? Be not offended—

The idols in thy temples have grown old.

Thy idols have taught thee to be at feud with thine own people;  
Our God also taught the preacher to hate and fight.

I have at last in desperation turned my face from both temple  
and mosque.

In images of stone thou hast conceived the presence of God,  
*For me every particle of my country's dust is a deity!*

Every Nationalist, Muslem or Hindu, quotes this line; but his political influence over them came to an end with this early phase.

In his second phase, though it is not as explicit as the first, he is no longer satisfied with a religion confined within geographical boundaries. Not the inanimate earth but living men must be served. It is more the struggle of an extreme individualism to lose itself in the community than a political creed.

Men have drunk their fill and the wine is still there,

The Yesterdays have vanished and the Morrow still remains.

The cycle of a community's life is enduring,

The individuals come and go;

The individual is a traveller, a stranger, the Community abides.

There is one point in Sir M. Iqbal's hasty retreat from pure Nationalism which must be understood by those who make a study of Muslem mentality. To whatever political creed the Muslem may belong, his ultimate loyalty must be to the One God who cannot be symbolized by material objects or by ideas. This point was best expressed by the Muslem members of the "Front Populaire," in the French colonies. They lifted their fists like the rest of their comrades, giving the sign of their political creed, but added to it the lifting of their

index finger to the sky. The last is the sign common to all Muslims: "There is no God but One God . . ." is always said with that gesture. Meaning God to be above and beyond all terrestrial ideas and symbols.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Jamia, Men and Ideas

ONE must study the Jamia if one wishes to grasp the forces at work in India. The institution has two purposes. First, to train the Muslem youth with definite ideas of their rights and duties as Indian citizens. Second, to co-ordinate Islamic thought and behaviour with Hindu. The general aim is to create a harmonious Indian nationhood without Muslems losing their Islamic identity. In its aim, if not always in its procedure, it is nearer to Gandhian Movement than any other Islamic institution I have come across.

To speak of the Jamia before mentioning the Aligarh College is putting the cart before the horse; for the Jamia is the offspring, though a rebellious one. The Aligarh College marked the first turning-point in Islam; the Jamia the second.

The principal of the Institution is Dr. Zakir Husein. There is not a single Indian intellectual whom I have met who has not asked me: "What do you think of Dr. Zakir Husein?" which means that Dr. Husein puzzles his countrymen. Yet it is impossible to meet a more straightforward person: the general perplexity is only due to the fact that he has no political label, and that his activities are not coloured by any party prejudices. He gives all his time and energy to educational problems; constructively and, to a reasonable extent, experimentally.

He is a Pathan—a frontier man: a big man, with a robust physique, and plenty of grit. His father, a lawyer, emigrated to Hyderabad where he established a brilliant and profitable practice; and when he died, quite young, left enough to his

seven sons to afford them a good education. Dr. Zakir Husein was the eldest, which meant a lot in an Eastern family of thirty years ago. It developed in him such a sense of responsibility that when he could no longer father the younger members of his family, he had to go out into the world and father some cause.

The early education of Dr. Zakir Husein was rigorously orthodox and puritanical. His school was an old-fashioned one. At home, as a boy, he met all sorts, even cranks, including a mystic for whom he copied bulky manuscripts. To this last he owes his excellent handwriting, as well as his tolerance of mystics—for he is not mystically inclined at all.

His university was the Aligarh where he was a lecturer in Economics after he had graduated. Aligarh represented the accomplishments, social and academic (classics predominated) of an English University. His good looks, conversational ability, and capacity for leadership and public speaking made him successful and popular. He gave the impression of versatility and talent, but also of irresponsibility—all that the Indian mind associates with an upper class Aligarh student of to-day. But when a new movement in 1919 attacked the Aligarh traditions, Zakir Husein took sides with the new movement. This movement was represented by Dr. Ansari and the late Maulana Mohammad Ali. They believed that Aligarh no longer answered the aspirations of the Muslims, and when they could neither demolish nor change it, they formed a new centre, and called it the Jamia Millia-Islamia, meaning the Muslim National University. But it includes the training of the youngest children, even having classes which could be called a combination of Froebel and Montessori.

In 1922 Zakir Husein took student-leave and went to Germany to complete his studies, and take a doctor's degree.

In 1923, while he was taking a vacation with another Indian student, I met him at Munich. In his early twenties he already had a beard, and no one could have associated him with youth. With this austere young man, so obviously mature, was another young student, Mujeeb by name. He was utterly different from Zakir Husein, with a delicate physique, refined features, thoughtful, tortured eyes. A temperament of artistic nature was written all over him. But outwardly he had the same quiet way, the same determined look as his companion. These were the first young Indians to make me wonder whether the talkative, versatile Indian students I had hitherto met, with their emphatic and passionate reactions, were really typical: certainly they were as different from these taciturn young men as Nordics and Latins.

Zakir Husein returned to India in 1926, a Doctor of Economics of Berlin University; and he became Principal of the Jamia. With his usual discrimination and persuasiveness, he selected suitable colleagues to create the new centre, and among them Mujeeb. Jamia had been under Zakir Husein for nine years already when I went to Delhi.

He is still bearded and has the same round face. Time has left no definite marks on its smoothness. But I thought there was a subtle shadow of perpetual fatigue on his features. The manifold difficulties of his position, as well as his constant effort to remain unruffled in an agitated atmosphere, have something to do with that expression. He has almost a self-hypnotized look—the look of those with a single aim. Yet I have often seen changes of mood on his impassive mask: I have even known him to be very angry, and seen him moved to tears of pity. But he always has himself under control. It was refreshing to see that his intimate knowledge of the West has developed neither an inferiority complex manifesting

itself in the patronizing airs and general back-slapping which so irritated Aldous Huxley on his visit to India.

What moves this placid man most is meanness, untruthfulness, and self-interest. "Some people here not only propagate lies, but they also believe in their own inventions," he said several times with clenched teeth. Well, that is not an Indian specialty. Lies, to be effective, must be accompanied by conviction.

This uncompromising love of truth under every circumstance, made Dr. Zakir Husein almost a replica of Dr. Ansari. During my two months' stay with Dr. Ansari, we discussed every aspect of politics and politicians in India; and he never forgave any departure from the standards of truth. He would remain the friend of anyone who preferred failure to success, if success would have meant a sacrifice of principle; but he would never associate with those who had been disloyal, or had used unworthy means to attain worthy ends.

In this respect Dr. Zakir Husein differed slightly. He believed that given the capacity and the character, no man could fail in the long run. This made him a successful educator and an inspiring leader. He gave the impression that any right cause rightly handled must necessarily succeed; and those trained by him rarely gave way to despondency. Again and again he would repeat that failures in politics were due to men who were ignorant of the social and economic factors at work. Men must be trained in the fundamental questions concerning society, before they can be ready to enter politics. This was a sound assumption for an educator.

In discussing women's emancipation he always said: "Education comes first. Women ought to be left free to do as they wish. To force them to live an ultra-modern life is as tyrannous as forcing them to remain behind the Purdah." Well, tyranny

is tyranny no matter what its aims, and in the long run produces the inevitable passive society of the East, or the robot society of the West. All Jamia professors took this attitude towards their wives, some of whom were in a transitional state and remained in Purdah, or were partly free; and some of whom had left it. All of them seemed to be women with strong personalities. But the daughters were carefully educated.

Jamia trains primary teachers "because," said Dr. Zakir Husein, "they are what we lack most. The State University graduate rarely becomes a primary teacher, considering the job beneath his dignity. There has been some difficulty in getting them placed, but the Jamia-trained primary teacher is efficient, and the need is great. So they do find jobs eventually."

Dr. Zakir Husein, I could see, was quite conscious of the fact that education was top-heavy in India, and that it is time to turn attention to primary education.

"Why do your graduates have some difficulty in getting jobs?"

"Our teaching is done in Urdu. We teach English only as a language. This is a new development, there being only a few institutions who use the native language as a vehicle of instruction. We feel that it must be done, for if Urdu is to become a living modern language, we must be able to use it for scientific thought. But the fact that we teach in Urdu deprives us of State subsidy. And graduates of schools which are not patronized by the State have some difficulty in getting jobs. However, we would welcome State help, or help from any quarter, provided that the donors did not interfere with our teaching."

There are post-graduate classes to train research workers. I saw with satisfaction that their researches and studies in the



historical field were not coloured by politics. Further, the students were genuinely interested in world problems, and studied them as much as opportunity would allow. In the East—in India particularly—these two points are of supreme importance. The closed-in character of Hindu mentality makes Indians more or less indifferent to anything outside India, and the enthusiasm born of their new nationalism leaves little room for objectivity. Muslims on the other hand are more international in mind. Their interest in the outside world—when it is in the Islamic countries—leads Hindus to call them Pan-Islamists. And their interest in the West often leads to their being accused of upholding Western Imperialism. Though there may be individual cases to justify these accusations, on the whole it is merely that the Muslim mind refuses to be limited to geographical boundaries. This outside interest found in the Jamia, since it cannot be suspected as being disloyal to the Indian cause, is a healthy and necessary thing. For it gives the professors and the students a broad outlook, and a capacity for comparative studies.

Another aim of the Jamia not yet realized is to have extension courses for vocational training. And it would be a credit to rich Muslims if they helped towards the realization of this aim. For India lacks, above all, skilled labour—artisans, plumbers, mechanics, etc. The standard of the lower middle-class can never be raised without them. There are a considerable number of Hindu institutions and organizations which supply the market to some extent. And Mahatma Gandhi's organizations work efficiently in the village areas to the same end. Muslims must train the equivalent class in towns and cities. As it is, there are very few among Muslims who could be called lower middle-class; and, without that, no *social equilibrium is possible*. I was told that the University-trained

Muslem who can find no job usually becomes a disgruntled politician who does no constructive social work; while the poor have no livelihood offered other than in the newly-founded factories. A Hindu friend of mine accused the Muslem worker of making possible the too-rapid industrialization of India. And some go as far as calling him the tool of the foreign capitalist. This cannot be remedied unless the Muslem is trained up to the same standard as the Hindu to take his place in village industries, and as an artisan in towns.

The Jamia bases its education on religion. Dr. Zakir Huscin himself is religious, though he does not talk much about it. He is a practising Mohammedan. He never eats pork, nor drinks wine, and I believe he prays daily according to Muslem ritual. He said:

“All action springs from faith.” For him, inner discipline, such as every free man must achieve, is not possible without faith. There is no exception to this way of thinking among the Indian reformers, if one leaves out of count the Communists. But Communism in itself is a social faith.

This unchanging attitude towards religion is not only due to the nature of Hinduism and Islam. It is, I believe, partly due to the fact that in India Western thought and culture have been assimilated through Anglo-Saxon rather than through French channels. Among the Anglo-Saxons there has been no revolutionary shattering of religion or the social structure.

In spite of his religion, however, Dr. Zakir Huscin—like Dr. Ansari—preserves a scientific attitude of mind in regard to knowledge. They never go to the Koran for corroboration of the scientific discoveries of the last centuries.

Their example should be followed by the Muslem world in general, if it is to become modern without losing that

faith which is the basis of its ethics. Experience, and an objective study of the Muslem world, had led the writer to the following conclusion:

Muslem thought to-day is not very different from Christian thought at the beginning of the Renaissance. It has two aspects: I. It tries to explain physical knowledge by the Scriptures. This is easier for the Muslem than for the Christian; for the Koran does not set out to explain the Creation as categorically as the Old Testament. Further, there are verses in the Koran which even corroborate certain scientific discoveries. This enables the Muslem thinker to retain his faith more easily than the Christian of the Renaissance period.

II. But it has its dangers as well. The habit of mind to look for an explanation for every physical phenomenon in a Book which is guide to moral action rather than a scientific treatise, leads quite a large number of young people to disappointment and to a loss of faith. And this means that they lose their moral guide as well.

As an example of the second aspect I will quote a Turkish student. He said:

"I can't call myself a Muslem any longer, because I cannot explain how Jonah lived in the whale's stomach."

"Then don't call yourself a Muslem."

"No, I can't say I am *not* a Muslem either. For its regulation of human relations as well as its individual moral standards are more workable and more humane than any other standards I know of."

"Then take the moral and social teachings, and leave Jonah and the whale alone."

"I can't do that either. Religion must be taken as a whole or left alone. I have no patience with those who try to explain parts by an obscure symbolism; that is like doping the mind."

The present tendency of the Christian world is to separate the physical and the moral truths from each other. And the Jamia seems to be on the right way of working in that direction.

In the Jamia the mixture of freedom and discipline struck me as its strongest and happiest educational achievement.

In the lower classes freedom was tempered with discipline, and it was apportioned. In the post-graduate classes absolute freedom was deliberately allowed, but the voluntary inner discipline of the student was a necessity. I will introduce two higher classes as examples.

First, a professor: Professor Mujeeb, of whom I have already spoken as the co-worker of Dr. Zakir Husein. He belongs to a well-known and prosperous family of Lucknow which includes two artists, a well-known politician, and a first-rate lawyer and business man among its members. Mujeeb is the product of an Indian school, as well as of Oxford and Berlin Universities. He is an able writer and critic. His Western education has enabled him to do away with the scholastic and obscure methods of the East in dealing with a subject. Though his subject-matter is taken from the very sources of his culture, yet he has been able to simplify and clarify it. I was told that his style in Urdu, as well as the unusual handling of his themes, has procured for him a wide, youthful public. With this ability, backed by his family, he could have easily obtained a lucrative position.

He preferred to work with Dr. Zakir, whose ideal and the manner by which he tries to realize it, attracted him. Therefore he chose the position of a poor professor at Jamia—for those who work there must leave behind all desire for an easy life. Including the Principal, all receive seventy-five rupees per month, which is barely enough to provide them with a roof and the austere sort of subsistence. This is a matter of principle

at the Jamia, and though the choice of a voluntary collective privation has been achieved by a great many Hindu institutions, it is unique among Muslims. They explain this, first, because it means an inner discipline and sacrifice for an ideal which must stand the test of material privation; second, since the appallingly low standard of the majority cannot be raised, those who pretend to teach them must share their hardships, and reduce the external difference to a minimum. It is sound psychology, hence the popularity of the Jamia among the poor. It is sound educational principle for those who, above everything, want to emphasize moral values and inner discipline as the only means of achieving freedom for the individual and the community.

I visited a history class for men, many of whom were older than the teacher. But the authority of the little man was incontestable. All of them, including the teacher, were sitting on the floor with low desks before them. I could not follow the lecture in Urdu, but I could see from diagrams and figures on the blackboard the clear outlines of a certain period of Indian history. The teacher developed his theme, always keeping before the eye the principal trends of comparative periods. The teacher and the students collaborated in handling the data before them intelligently, objectively, and with the utmost freedom.

Here is a lecture to post-graduates on Ethics. The Professor is an Indian Christian. The passionate note behind his admirably organized lesson whenever he speaks of human equality and freedom, gives one the feeling that he was either an Untouchable once, or has studied them. He speaks in English. No morality without the free exercise of man's judgment and will power, he cries. And it sounds like a war-cry against Caste-mentality. Even an external symbol, he says, which

men adopt, may be an influence from without. It may in the long run colour man's judgment in favour of those who have the same symbol; it may lead to Caste in which there can be no freedom for the individual mind. He is evidently a learned man, and one from a German University. But his revolt against a passive attitude of mind in regard to Caste has given him castophobia. So much so that he attacks the Gandhi-caps which the students wear. In his mind they are signals of a new Caste . . . Gandhi-Caste. But the students who have donned the caps of their own free will listen courteously, but stick to their caps. There is a mixture of maturity, tolerance, and freedom of judgment which only such a type of training and education can confer on youth.

Of the teaching in general in the primary classes at the Jamia there is not much to be said. You could find its parallel in all up-to-date primary schools in the West. The method and the matter taught are the same, with a marked tendency to concentrate on Islamic history and literature. All the teaching is done in Urdu. Only I noticed that special efforts were being made to phoneticize the script (Arabic). We Turks also made the same efforts before changing our script from the Arabic to the Latin. Whether this attempt at the Jamia is the sign for a complete change of the Urdic script in India also we will discuss later.

That part of the curriculum which deals with the creative instinct of the child interested me most. Therefore I spent quite a considerable time at the drawing and hand-work classes. This is of great importance in Eastern education. The old East kept this creative instinct in swathing clothes; so rigidly wrapt and bound by imposed rules and by conven-

tional subjects that the imagination had no elbow-room to move. It was either stifled, or if it survived because of the exceptional talent of the individual, it expressed itself within the same beaten track, putting all life and genius within tightest and narrowest lines and shapes. Hence the East produced artists who could write a whole chapter of the Koran on a single rice.

On the other hand the tendency in the West has been for more and more freedom. In certain cases all outside guidance is abolished. The result of this teaching in the West has produced ultra-modern art, impressionism run wild, a twisted realism, where you cannot tell whether an artist means a woman at a washtub or a moonlit prairie. This lack of total discipline has had, in my opinion, as disastrous effects on Western mentality as the swathing clothes of aestheticians have had on the child's initiative in the East. Anarchy or passivity: there is not much to choose between the two. The problem of the educator is how to combine guidance with freedom. I saw that the Jamia managed this admirably. It was a delightful surprise to see the ingenious toys and the articles of use which the little ones produced out of nothing. But the drawings were still more remarkable. Nature and men and old tales, such as we have always known in the East, were there; but seen from a different angle.

What struck me most was that the element of fear was no longer evident in those tales, as the children had thought them out to draw them. Here is a picture of a "Tejjal" (Ogre). For us it was a thing of terror. The little boy at the Jamia has made a jolly thing out of it. The release of the child's mind from fear in the East is of primary importance. Home life, school life, civic life, all used to train him by fear. The blessed rod, or the Unseen Spirit, followed him from the

cradle to the grave. That the Jamia has conquered this was expressed by the words of the Headmaster, Dr. Akbar, a product of Columbia University :

“When the children first came here, it was impossible to address to them the simplest word without their raising their arm to the head in a protective gesture. The child is ever trying to avert a blow. But at the end of six months’ time they even take a scolding, standing up and looking you in the face in the normal way.”

The gesture is symptomatic of the evil from which the East has suffered most. Expecting nothing but blows. Parents, teachers, rulers, native or foreign, have mostly used Fear. Strike, strike, strike. . . . The result is either the cowed and the bullied individual with all sorts of unhealthy inhibitions, or the bully himself when he gets a chance. Strike or be struck seems to be the practical philosophy of the Eastern child. Unless the East as a whole metes out discipline and freedom proportionally in its education, the reaction of the East, when it has a chance, will be a huge blow to all its past, to all its rulers, native or foreign.

I spent a whole afternoon with the little ones. First in their sitting-room. No furniture except carpets. They all sat on the floor, the staff as well as the students. They were mostly boys, with a few little girls, and all from six to nine. It was evident Dr. Zakir Husein was the favourite. The smaller members crept through the ranks and approached him. Before long he looked like a tree with a living plant creeping over him. Faces looked over his shoulders, arms leaned against his lap. He neither petted them nor pushed them away. On the contrary, his body took the necessary bend to suit the little world round him. It reminded me of a taxi-driver at Hampstead whom I used to watch with such keen interest. Squirrels,



the shyest of all living creatures, used to climb all over him as if his body were their playground. I used to think that the world had lost an educator in that taxi-driver.

As they did not know English Dr. Zakir Husein translated their questions. They were intelligent ones compared with those of other Eastern children.

"What do you want to be?" I asked them.

Merchants mostly, then doctors, and one wanted to be a sailor. That was a boy who had not seen the sea. None wanted to be officials or soldiers, which I took as a favourable sign. As to their favourite heroes, that also impressed me. None mentioned a king, or a commander, though Indian history is full of flashy names of that kind. Omar, the Fourth Caliph, was an exception. They told me that they chose him because he was the most just man they knew. But the favourite hero was an Indian who had sacrificed his life for a friend. To be true to a friend unto death . . . that was something worth while copying.

Did they recite poetry? Not much. Dr. Zakir told me that they were discouraged from public recitation. Weren't there enough youthful orators all over India produced by the schools? But they liked acting, and in that were encouraged. So they took me to the garden and gave me a play in the open.

Charming, that garden, half concrete and half lawn. Sheds opened on to it, and there was a pond with a few trees round it. Each showed me his favourite animal and told me about its likes and dislikes. They were the usual pets, including a gay, brown monkey.

The play was acted round the pond. They did it in Urdu which I did not understand. But the mimicry was perfect. It was a play in which everyone was some animal. I could tell which was the monkey as it climbed up a tree, taking

refuge from the bigger animals which chased it. All the while two tiny human birds sang by the pond, and they did it extremely well. This is not the only play they acted for me. But each time they started acting they forgot all about the spectators, which is the supreme test of a lack of self-consciousness.

After a while they would visit me in my room at Salam House, in small groups of three or four. They were accompanied by Miss Philipson, a charming German woman to whose ability a lot of the success in the training of the little ones is due. They were quite at home in my room, and after a friendly conversation in monosyllables, or by gestures, they began to play among themselves.

But when this miniature company heard the call to prayers, no matter how absorbed in their play, they rose and assumed a serious air. Then they marched out, led by a little Pathan boy, the leader of the group. They would join Begam Ansari for evening prayers. And the little Pathan boy led them, for in Islam it is a man who must officiate. The religion taught to these children consisted mostly of saying their prayers regularly five times a day, but always collectively. The verses to be recited and the simple moral precepts were the only things they had to learn in regard to religion.

The educator who insists on the religious factor would say:

"All these movements of the Islamic prayer, rising and bending, the five times ablutions before prayers, consisting of a complete washing, are a splendid hygiene. It gives them clean habits. It is good discipline."

The secular educator would answer:

"But wouldn't a daily shower bath, games and gymnastics do the same?"

"Yes, but with years one drops the games and the gym-

nastics, but the prayer habit remains. Do you deny the good health, the good behaviour, and the long life of the practising Muslem?"

"I don't, but why connect bodily movements and the repetition of verses (the meaning of which some of them probably do not know) with religion? Where does the moral effect of it come in?"

"All the time the child is conscious while praying that he is seeking contact with God. The teaching that a religious man must be decent and behave well he associates with his prayers. Secular morality taught to children without any religious association hardly affects their behaviour, though in rare cases it may do so with grown-up individuals. But *only in exceptional cases*. Man in general must believe the Good to be higher than his own will. He must believe in it as an immutable divine law. And all this must be woven into his training from the earliest times."

That is what Jamia educators would always say. Their nearness to Mahatma Gandhi, that is to the Hindu conception, is well illustrated by the following conversation. It takes place between Mahatma Gandhi and Pierre Cérésolle, the President of the International Voluntary Service. He is a Swiss and a Pacifist. While visiting Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha, he attended prayers regularly. He said:<sup>1</sup>

"Repetition of one and the same thing over and over again jars on me. It may be the effect of my mathematical temperament."

"But even in mathematics you have your recurring decimals," said Mahatma Gandhi.

"But each recurs with a definite new fact."

"Even so. Each repetition has a new meaning, each repetition carries you nearer to God. . . . I may tell you that you are here

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the *Harijan*, May 25, 1936.

talking to no theorist, but to one who has experienced what he says every minute of his life, so much so that it is easier for the life to stop than for this incessant process to stop. It is a *definite need of the soul.*"

"I agree, but for the average man it becomes an empty formula. . . ."

". . . The best thing is liable to be abused. There is no room for any amount of hypocrisy, but even hypocrisy is an ode to virtue. And I know that for ten thousand hypocrites you could find millions of simple souls who find their solace in it. *It is like scaffolding essential to a building.*"

". . . You agree that the scaffolding has to be removed when the building is complete?"

"Yes, it would be removed when this body is no more."

There are two points in this conversation which the educator must necessarily consider, whether he himself is religious or not.

1. *Is religion a definite need of the soul?*

So far the most objective student of history must admit that it is so. The Soviets who have systematically and honestly made the experiment to replace religion by a rational and civic morality have not succeeded. Those who are anti-religious among the Communists belong to the class who have taken up Communism as a new faith. The masses, especially the peasants, have not been changed. In *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, by Fülöp-Miller, one reads that the peasant who has discarded the icon which he used to carry round his neck now has another icon with Machine painted over it. In America and England, where the old Churches have ceased to satisfy, new forms of religion have risen, sometimes of the crankiest sort. In France, the home of rationalism, they speak of all sorts of strange practices, including Devil-worship and Black Magic. Even the intellectuals and the scientists do

not seem to be immune from it. Therefore there are enough data to make one believe that religion is a definite need of the soul.

2. *The educator cannot ignore this reality in human nature.*

One school of educators say that it must be utilized in the training of the young as a basis of morality and action. Another school, the rationalists, declare that it can be replaced by a thorough training in civic morality. It would be of the utmost use if there were a *world conference of educators of all faiths* who would study the question in the light of their experiences, and pronounce upon it. The stage has passed when men quarrelled as to whether this or that religion is the true one. We have reached the stage when we need a definite and common attitude towards religion and not religions. Do we accept faith as the only source from which all action springs, or not? That is the question.

The attitude of the Jamia in regard to this question can be summed up in the following sentences:

“There is no issue, moral or material, which can’t be judged in the light of our Commandments. Cleanliness, restraint, rules of health and conduct are all there. There is made plain the everlasting equality of man, and there also are rules in regard to economic adjustments which are workable and will ever be so. When we train the child’s mind to accept all these things as necessary rules of life we shall have laid the basis of a better and more workable world.”

The last I saw of the Jamia was when its members assembled outside Delhi to lay the foundation-stone of their new buildings. They own considerable lands where they are looking forward to erecting a more up-to-date and larger institution.

The ceremony took place under a huge tent. Dr. Ansari presided, and the principal Hindu and Muslem leaders were there. The larger sums of money came from the Hindu world, which showed that the Hindus accepted the educational value of the Jamia more than do the leading Muslems. But the Muslem masses also contributed, squeezing a few annas (farthings) regularly out of their already meagre livelihood. This spoke well for the Muslem masses.

The youngest child was to lay the foundation-stone. He stood on the platform and seemed rather restless among the grown-ups. Opposite the platform were all my young friends. They behaved very well, listening patiently to the inaugural speeches made from the platform. But after a while they became fidgety and began to talk. The teachers who sat among them did nothing, probably knowing what would happen. A little girl of seven restored order. She was a puny creature with sharp black eyes. Her eyes glared, and certain ribs felt her sharp elbows stuck into them. There was no more fidgeting. She seemed to me a symbol of the modern Indian woman, asserting her rights by proving her ability to make her men behave.



## CHAPTER IX

### Concerning Some "Isms"

THE terms the visitor in India comes across are mostly: Communalism, Nationalism, and Socialism. In Salam House one realizes within a week their implications in every Indian problem. I want to present them briefly as I understood them in Salam House.

Broadly defined, Communalism means seeing everything in the light of one's Community's interests. And this interest has five aspects: religious, social, cultural, economic, and political. The religious aspect underlies the other four all the time; and every Indian belongs to some particular community in which these five aspects are differently assembled. Considering the number of communities, this means that an everlasting struggle for adjustment is going on. But in reality only two of them count—Muslem and Hindu. All the rest have already adjusted themselves, and continue doing so according to the relations between Muslem and Hindu.

As long as India was content to be ruled by an outside Power which did not belong either to the Muslem or Hindu way of thought and life, she continued to be composed of definitely outlined subdivisions. The outside Power has to find a *modus vivendi* between them all, keeping a balance of some sort between their complicated and contrary interests. These minutely divided communities—nations within nations—were, from one point of view, ideal for an outside Power which aims at ruling such a vast sub-continent by a numerically small number of men. In such a position the outside Power becomes a necessity, a fixture. But it is not an easy



job. It needs extraordinary clearness, flexible methods, force, and an administrative capacity to a very high degree. From this point of view the student of India must recognize the unusual strength and administrative capacity of the British rule.

But the moment the Indians began to think of India in terms of an independent nation, they also began to think of the necessity of finding another *modus vivendi*, one which will not be an imposition and which does not necessitate the interference of an outside Power, but which will depend on mutual consent and sacrifice.

The first phase of the desire for self-government in India led the two main communities to come to an understanding on political issues. But behind political issues there are always the economic ones. The fight over electorates, whether they should be joint or separate, is an example of this. For it is a fight over the number of posts and remunerative jobs to be controlled by one or the other community. And where does Nationalism come in? To understand it in the Indian sense one has always to see it in relation to Communalism, and trace out the stages it has so far passed through.

I. All Communalists are also Nationalists to-day. That is, the Muslem and the Hindu Communalists alike stand for an Independent India; or they have to pretend that they do. For the Independence idea has penetrated the masses, and the leaders must acquiesce to it, no matter how confused it may be. But it stands to reason that each of the two Communities dreams of an Independence in which its own interests will be supreme. It also stands to reason that the very nature of Communalism invites foreign rule; for no matter what *modus vivendi* Muslem and Hindu may find, it can only be temporary, and so long as there is a clash of interests there will always be opportunity for any strong Power to attack India.

II. The second stage, that which calls itself Nationalist, and to which a considerable majority belong, has only now adjusted its internal political difference. A sincerely joint action on doubtful issues is now possible, and has worked in the past. But there is still conflict on the economic side. As to a unifying culture—such as a common language and script—it is as yet only talk. On the other hand, Muslims and Hindus sincerely respect each other's religions; and if they do not share each other's faith, at least they agree with regard to the place of faith in life.

Is there a third party which is sincerely trying to create an Independent India in which each citizen will think of India first and of his community next, just as a Frenchman or an Englishman thinks of England's or France's interests first and then of Scotch, Welsh, Breton, Basque afterwards? No, there is nothing very clear yet. But Socialism, at least one aspect of it (though in its infancy at the moment) tends in that direction. Socialism in India has a double aspect:

I. Socialism interpreted by the Scriptures. In the Hindu Scriptures it is naturally based on class or Caste. In the Muslim Scriptures it approaches Western Socialism of a moderate sort, for no power on earth can make Islam a Caste-nation, because of its integral democratic nature. This, and the fact that the Hindus are the Capitalist class give the Muslim a more definite leaning towards Socialism. But as long as Socialism in India is based on religion and the interpretation of Scriptures, there is no chance of its being organized on modern international lines.

II. Socialism borrowed from Western ideologies and based purely on economic issues. This has followers among city folk where Industrialism is a fact, and the struggle between capital and labour has started. This aspect of Socialism

has crystallized itself round Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's name. And in 1935 I have come across more Muslem youths than Hindus who supported Jawaharlal Nehru as a political leader.

These activities which regard Socialism as an alternative to Communalism and Nationalism were not clearly seen at Salam House. Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader, was in prison. He has been in prison most of the time. His sister sent me his books on history which were extremely well thought-out and objective summaries of historical forces. I also saw his picture. A lean and refined face with thoughtful eyes. I met him in the flesh himself a year later in Paris. And his biography, very characteristic of the man, I read a year later. He represents a trend which must be discussed at the end of the book.

I came across Dr. Han Sahib, a visitor to Salam House, who also represented Socialism of a sort. He was the brother of the much-talked-of Abdul-Gaffar Khan, the leader of the "Red Shirts," an organisation in the Frontier provinces. Abdul-Gaffar Khan was in prison, and his organization had been judged as dangerous and dissolved by the Indian Government. Dr. Khan Sahib himself was a lovable and picturesque person. He always wore a long white shirt and a Gandhi-cap. He told me that their followers were Gandhists and Socialists, and had accepted non-violence as a doctrine.

I have been so much absorbed with the life of Modern India, and the forces which dominate it, that I have neglected the occult side which is so much emphasized in the West. Compared to the other aspects, I believe this side to be negligible. And I thought this a healthy sign in India. I understood that the number of men who have abandoned

society are fewer now than they used to be. The man who lives in a cave has lost touch with the India of to-day. Asceticism still counts, but holy men must live among the people, and work for them and with them before they can have any influence. One can safely say that negative mysticism and occultism are on the wane in India. This does not mean that religion is also on the wane. For religion, such as the average Indian, and the majority of leading intellectuals or political leaders understand it, is something which regulates action, and leads man to take active part in his social environment. Yet the occult and the mystical in their negative sense are not extinct altogether. I became aware of this through the following letter:

DEAR MADAM,

You will be surprised to receive this letter from an unexpected quarter. I am writing this to inform you that a God-Intoxicated Soul, who is in touch with the Infinite, is staying in Hrishivagh (near Hardwar). She is a soul who has no Guru or Sadhane in this life to her credit. But according to some great Hindu philosophers who have particularly come into contact with Her, no Soul of this type has been born in this country during the four or five centuries. For . . .

I leave the rest of the letter out, which deals with the powers of this Divine Lady. I have no quarrel with men who want to leave man alone and the unsatisfactory world he has created. It must be even a temptation to everyone to retire from the world considering the hideous aspects of it, and the unbelievable cruelty of human nature. I also know that if quite a number of decent people do not retire from the world it is because they would consider it a desertion, a shirking of one's duty to one's fellow creatures. But when those who leave the world alone also want to attract attention they

seem to be nothing but publicity hunters. Some train the body to do unusual tricks: they are called acrobats. And the mediaeval saint who stood on one foot on a pillar for twenty years, or the Indian hermit who invites an audience to his unusual way of life, can impress certain people as spiritual acrobats.

All the same, as my correspondent signed his name and gave an address, I could not take the letter as a mystification. Neither had I any right to doubt his sincerity of conviction. I did not go. A man or woman who has left his fellow creatures to their wiles or to their fate must do so altogether. If people need guides, they want them to be of the serene, cool-headed kind, the kind that share the hard life of the rest, and that are ever studying life in all its material as well as in its spiritual manifestations!

PART II

India Seen on Highways and Byways



## CHAPTER X

### Aligarh

My wanderings began at Aligarh, not the city but the University.

Outside the University all that I saw was a desolate, wild place with some old walls and the remnants of what looked like a small dilapidated fort. Forts and tombs, they cover the face of all Indian highways and byways.

"The place is haunted," said my companion.

"How?"

He pointed to the shabby ruins, and added: "Voices are heard from there. That much is certain. I believe they are trying to find some rational or scientific reason for it."

Who would have ever thought of India trying to find a rational or scientific explanation for what used to be an occult phenomenon!

In the University, before doing anything else, I visited the tomb of its founder, Sir Saiyid Ahmad. A simple, white mausoleum with pink roses climbing over the lattice-work before the shrine. Three-quarters of a century have passed since he founded the University. But one has still to know him and what he stood for if one aims at understanding the Muslem of to-day in India. Though his critics at the moment are more numerous than his admirers, even that shows how deep his influence must have been, and still is. The most objective view would be something like this.

As the country has passed mostly from Muslem hands to British rulers, their earliest supporters and to some degree collaborators were Hindus rather than Muslems in British



India. Muslims stood apart, and probably were kept apart also, for they were considered the fighting race; so they kept out of Western influence and Western education for a much longer period than their Hindu countrymen.

In the middle of the nineteenth century an Islamic Renaissance of a somewhat rationalist nature took place throughout the Islamic world, led by such men as Jemaladdin-Afghani and Sheikh Abdu. The movement had many aspects and ramifications, differing according to the place and the people. Its one common factor was that it was the first attempt of the Islamic world to search for a *modus vivendi* with the Western Christian world. Sir Saiyid Ahmad represents the Indian side of it.

He was born at Delhi in 1817 and his family was connected with the old Mogul court. One can say that he knew the rotten state of the last days of decadent Mogul administration. He also knew the English administration of the days of the East India Company; which evidently was not a great improvement on the old regime. But when the Mutiny broke out he remained loyal to the English.

The Mutiny, in the opinion of certain English writers, was a fortunate occurrence. Vincent Smith, in the Oxford *History of India*, quotes Sir Lepel Griffin as affirming that thanks to the Mutiny 'the entire system of administration was changed for the better. "It replaced an unprogressive, selfish, and commercial system of administration by one liberal and enlightened." For the Indians its various aspects and its failure had many lessons to teach. On the surface and, in fact, to a considerable extent, the Mutiny was the revolt of the old order against the new. But there was much more to it than meets the eye. There certainly seems to have been a desire to clear the country of its last conquerors. Yet one can hardly

call it a struggle for independence, for it arose from two different points of view, that of the Hindus and that of the Muslims; and these two were often in conflict with each other, as well as with the English. So far as the masses were concerned it had the usual war-cry of the East: "Religion is in danger." But it was not a single religion which was in danger. Hindus were fighting for their religion against both the Muslim and the Christian English; and the Muslims were fighting for theirs.

Sir Saiyid Ahmad criticized the British administration openly in his writings at that time, though he also admitted its good effects. He said that it lacked a knowledge of the people it governed; it co-operated much less with the natives than the Muslim power preceding it had done; and it had a superiority complex, looking down upon the native, and never considering him as a gentleman. Nevertheless, in his opinion, it was preferable to the Hindu rule, though he did not say so openly. Whether he saw that the British would eventually get the upper hand it is difficult to tell. But to any objective student of history it is evident that, in those days when war still meant courage and organization rather than scientific equipment as it does to-day, the British would have found it difficult to suppress the rising if it had had a united front. The failure of the Mutiny is the first object lesson to show the people of India that no movement on a large scale can succeed without a genuine co-operation between Hindus and Muslims.

In Sir Saiyid Ahmad's choosing to side with the English there is another historical and perhaps philosophic truth. The Muslims are nearer to the Western Christian than they are to the old Eastern philosophy. They form a link between the Eastern and Western outlook, their culture and philosophy having played a greater part than is yet realized in the early

passage of the West from the Mediaeval to the Modern era. A Westerner may consider the Islamic point of view different from his own while he is at home; but the moment he travels in the East he finds it nearer and more practical and workable than that of the more ancient East. This has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority of either. They are different, that is all. An Englishman, a scholar of Eastern languages and religions, said to the writer at the Viceroy's luncheon party: "Islam is the religion of the West, Eastern people have Easternized it; Christianity is the religion of the East, Western people have Westernized it."

So much for Sir Saiyid Ahmad's political leanings. Educationally he had the same bias towards the West. He wanted to Westernize the Indian Muslims and managed it, to some extent, at the cost of great struggle and suffering, by establishing the Aligarh College.

Said a Muslim intellectual and critic of Sir Saiyid Ahmad:

"It is true that he tried to give a Western, therefore a rational interpretation to Islam. For the spirit of his time was rational. But he was persecuted by the Orthodox, and there is no doubt that he had to face greater odds than we realize to-day. But it is equally true that he made a compromise with the Orthodox when he left the religious teaching of Aligarh in their hands. If he had attempted to *reform the mind of the Muslims*, such as he had originally intended, instead of letting the old stagnant minds of the Orthodox dominate the young, things would have been different. His reform was only on the surface. His admiration of the West was based on his being dazzled by its externals. He laid a too great emphasis on the *behaviour* of the West: the adoption of forks and knives meant more to him than an understanding of the inner workings of the Western mind and its philosophy. He should have

revived the living principles of Islam, which alone could change the Muslem world and make it co-operate with the modern world. The result is that the Aligarh College has produced *men who look modern on the surface but are mostly fanatical and stagnant in mind*. I should say that even what they call religion is merely religiosity."

"What about his social reforms?"

"They were only on paper. When we call Sir Saiyid Ahmad a behaviourist in his educational aims, we have said all. As to his politics, I believe that Sir Saiyid Ahmad thought of the English as a fixture. Up to his time the Muslems were kept away from the English and their administration. The Hindus filled all the native posts—perhaps they were better equipped for it, for their Westernization began earlier. In Aligarh he meant to train Muslems who could co-operate with and serve the English masters.

"His second compromise was in regard to the language. He was the centre of a literary and intellectual revival in Urdu. Poets, prosists, thinkers on modern lines were all around him. It is they who really have established the modern Urdu prose, and introduced modern forms in fiction. Why has he not made Urdu the vehicle of education in Aligarh?"

"Could Urdu cope at that time with a modern education?"

"Yes, provided the international technical terms were preserved."

"Would the English, who were the principal helpers of Sir Saiyid Ahmad, have stood for it?"

"I can't tell. But after three-quarters of a century of this conformist form of education in Aligarh, the Intelligenzia it has produced can be divided into two classes: (i) Indifferent to Islam as a way of life, but anxious to use it as a means to political ends; (ii) Revivalist in a spiritual and moral sense.

These do not care for externals. They want to create out of the fundamentals of Islam a new philosophy which may determine the future bearings of Islamic society in India. These do not attempt to explain scientific discoveries by Koranic verses. The mechanical achievements of the West do not overpower them. For them the domain of religion is moral; and as such, instead of wasting time wondering whether the Quantum Theory or Relativity can be sanctioned by the Koran or not, they try to turn Islamic teachings into a lever of conduct, such as will create the future citizen of India.

"All this could have been achieved already if Sir Saiyid Ahmad had not made compromises," continued the critic. "As it is, he has made the Muslims lose half a century, and prevented them from establishing a clear ideology to guide and organize the Modern Muslim Community."

From whatever angle one looks at Sir Saiyid Ahmad, he appears to be like a huge stone thrown into the hitherto stagnant waters of Islamic Society in India. The waves it set going are still in motion, though not always in the direction he would have chosen. Even in his own time there were those who did not see eye to eye with him. Especially on the political side. Though Sir Saiyid Ahmad was so loyal to the English that he discouraged the Muslims from joining the Congress, that national body whose aim was Independence, there were men around him who openly propagated the idea of an Independent India. Hasrat, one of his collaborators, was the first advocate of Integral Independence. Mahatma Gandhi has said concerning Hasrat,<sup>1</sup> to a Muslim friend of mine, "When I have a talk with Hasrat, I cannot sleep in peace."

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that both S. Nadvi and Hasrat, who must have been young members of Sir Saiyid Ahmad's reform movement in 1898, when he (S. Ahmad) died, differ in their political outlook from their leader.

Anyone addressing the eleven hundred odd students of Aligarh from the pulpit must admire Sir Saiyid Ahmad's taste in choosing their uniform. Tight black coats buttoned to the throat, white trousers, and red fezes or black caps.

Why the fezes which are the Turkish headdress of Sir Saiyid Ahmad's time? As far as Sir Saiyid Ahmad was concerned, there was not much love lost between him and the Turks. The contemporary movement in Turkey had much less to do with the Islamic Renaissance than had the other Muslem centres. Turkey at the time was fast Westernizing itself on the ideology of the French Revolution, though she diluted it with her own national culture. French ideology is, as a matter of fact, as little congenial to the average Indian as it is to the average Englishman. Neither did Sir Saiyid Ahmad consider the Khalif-Sultan as the legitimate head of the Muslims throughout the world. Therefore the significance of the red fez in Sir Saiyid Ahmad's College means one thing. The Turk was, at that time, the only Muslem who held his own in face of the tremendous aggressive force of the West, which was colonizing the entire Muslem world. Though the Turk Westernized himself earlier and much more profoundly than the other Muslims, he did it of his own free will. So the Indian Muslem of Sir Saiyid Ahmad's type, while content with the British domination, and even feeling it necessary, had that internal and probably unconscious urge for freedom which is in the heart of all men. Their safety and happiness did *not depend on their own efforts*. Their Westernization was a thing produced in a hothouse, under an artificial light. The fez meant the fresh air, the natural light. As such the fez had a most pathetic symbolic significance.

The teaching in Aligarh is a reflection of an English University, with Eastern instead of Western classics emphasized. The new laboratories, institutes directed by native and foreign professors, indicate a fresh orientation. Science is going to have a greater place than classics in the future.

Another reminder of the English University is the serious insistence on traditional ceremonies. They conferred on the writer the honour of membership to the Students' Union. There were speeches in Urdu, poems recited in Urdu. For the first time I had a sense of the superior beauty of Urdu over Persian. Its harmony, virility, and sonorous strength impressed me. When I rose to speak, I felt flowers raining upon me, so much so that I could neither open my mouth nor my eyes. After this avalanche of flowers ended, I looked up. From the skylight two men poured down tons of petals. A waste on a little old woman, but very beautiful nevertheless. India says it with flowers—the welcoming of visitors, rituals, ceremonies of all sorts are flowery manifestations. Garlands and garlands, rains of petals. . . . Let this not stand as an indication of effeminacy. For even the rugged frontier people, who are as masculine as any men could be, express themselves with flowers.

On the wall opposite me, with the pictures of other honorary members of the Union, stands the portrait of Abdur Rahman Qureshi. Every lecturer addressed that portrait with a solemn and reverential tone. This extreme sensibility to Abdur Rahman Qureshi<sup>1</sup> is also symptomatic of the urge to *Independence*.

<sup>1</sup> Abdur Rahman Qureshi was among the young members of the Red Crescent Mission of the Balkan War. He remained in Turkey after 1912, and entered the Turkish Army. He fought at different fronts in the Great War. In 1920 he joined the Nationalist Struggle at Ankara and worked with the writer at headquarters. In 1923 he represented Turkey at Kabul. In 1927 he was murdered in Istanbul by an unknown person or persons. Neither the motive for this ugly crime nor the criminals have been brought to light. He himself was a brave and able officer, and a lovable person.

The passionate admiration for him is not at all a sign of Indian sympathy for Turkey; nor is it even for his bravery in the Great War. It is for his having taken sides with a people who were fighting against forces which threatened their independence.

At a tea party to which the students invited me they discussed Islamic culture and Hindu-Muslim relations. In the minds of certain of the students the obstacle to an understanding between the Hindu and the Muslims was, I think, a curious inferiority complex. Aligarh is the first Muslim centre where I saw the fear of losing the Islamic identity, of being assimilated by the Hindu. I do not think it is only the Muslim who can be blamed for this strange psychology. What was incomprehensible to me was how any Muslim in India could think it possible. For in spite of the extraordinary assimilative power of Hinduism, Islam is the only religion which has not been incorporated in the Hindu system. However, it is an aspect of the clash between Hindu and Muslim which both sides should consider seriously.





## CHAPTER XI

### Lahore

WE are in Punjab, at the city of Lahore. That it is one of the principal Muslem cities there is no doubt. The cry of "Allah Akbar" is an indication of the strength of the inter-Islamic feeling. There are several thousands to welcome a Muslem woman from a strange land.

I was the guest of a rich landowner. Luxury and beauty without end. The house built as usual round an open quadrangle. The pond in the marble hall with its lotus flowers and the fountain were worthy of an exhibition of the arts. With the hospitality and courtesy of an Indian house it laid open its drawing-room as well as its lawn for the crowds of visitors who came to see me.

The ladies of the house were behind strict Purdah. I saw them at a single meal, when there were no men present. The rest of the meals were mixed; and I was invited elsewhere for a greater number of them. One of the unforgettable memories was the seeing of Begam Shah Nawaz daily. She was, in a way, my hostess throughout my visit to Lahore. She organized the feminine side of the entertainments; and she gave me information in regard to the position of women, especially of Muslem women, in the Punjab.

Feminine contacts were these: Visit to a college for young women in Purdah; a tea-party given by the Women's Club or Clubs. It was a sumptuous affair held under a huge silk tent beautifully embroidered in red and gold. There were about three hundred women of all races, including English. Once more I thought how much better women all over the

world understood each other than men. No matter how different their loyalties, they have one loyalty in common allegiance to their sex.

Among the speakers a Pathan woman, an inspector of schools, was most interesting to me. For among the Muslems, especially in the frontier provinces, women are still rare who hold public positions.

The dainties provided one could enjoy without a pang of conscience at Lahore; for it is the first city where there is no very sharp division between extreme misery and affluence. As a matter of fact, Lahore seemed more prosperous than the cities I had hitherto seen. Even the villages round about seem comfortably off. Though the economic crisis has affected Lahore in particular and the Punjab in general, it is still better off than other centres. Everyone looks healthy, robust, and well fed. And they are mostly fine specimens of the human race.

There was a tea party at-home to which girl students came. They were all tall girls, all given to sport, and having an air of self-confidence and independence difficult to associate with Purdah women. To find an assembly of such handsome lasses with such natural gaiety, one must go to an American University.

Their dress was not the sari—that is, the floating drapery of one piece wound round the figure. Beautiful as the sari is—and perhaps for that reason it has become the national costume of the emancipated women—it always seemed to me somewhat unpractical for those who have modern professions. The Muslem girls of Lahore wear tight trousers and long silk chemises buttoned at the side, more like the Chinese woman's costume. Over their hair they have a thin floating veil, embroidered all round or at the borders. This seemed

to me more practical; but I admit that women who adopt it must have the figures of Lahore women, which are not common in any nation. These girls were all daughters of the rich, and their interests seemed to be confined to their own class. I have also met Purdah women at the houses where I dined. Before the dinner, which was mixed, I went to the harem and had pleasant visits with the wives or mothers of my hosts. One saw three definite generations with three definite thoughts and ways of life. Grandmothers, entirely old-fashioned; mothers, though still absorbed in their homes, yet interested in women's education and proud of their English-speaking daughters who were out of Purdah; such daughters who were entirely emancipated.

Begam Shah Nawaz took me to Shaliwar Garden, the royal park where the old Muslem Sultans came for rest and pleasure in the days gone by. Her family have been trustees of the garden, as well as of the villages around it. Marble fountains in the garden with ingenious water arrangements, a profusion of lovely flowers looking like living Oriental carpets, stately trees, alleys, royal lodges for both sexes. . . .

We sat in the shade with Begam Shah Nawaz, and she told me about the status of Muslem women at Lahore. When she told me that the Muslems of Lahore have adopted the custom-law (old Hindu) in place of the Muslem Law in regard to women's economic status and inheritance, I confess I was greatly surprised. For the Indian Muslems, on the whole, call themselves fundamentalists, and are supposed to be keepers of the Religious Law; and Islamic Law in regard to these things is progressive and equitable, while the Hindu Law does not accept woman's right to inherit at all. She told me that one hundred and seventy Muslem women had become Christians in order to be able to inherit; for each religious

community has its particular Family Law, and the individual who passes from one religion to the other also becomes subject to another inheritance law. Individuals should be free to change their faith if they find some other faith more congenial to their spiritual aspirations; but when this is done for material benefit it is ugly. And uglier still to think that men knowingly have forced women into this.

That evening I had to address Lahore at the Municipal Hall. The few minutes I had before the meeting I was to talk to a few members of the Muslem College. I supposed there would be a dozen of them; they were three hundred. And they all tried their knowledge of the Islamic Law on me, criticizing the judicial reforms in Turkey on sectarian lines. I was most grateful to Begam Shah Nawaz for having furnished me with the information in regard to Muslem women in Lahore. I used, even abused, it to confound my hecklers, who were, I admit, very wideawake and interesting to talk to. A student from Java told me after the talk that in his country women had attained the same status as men, and that they were in favour of the change and education of Turkish women. This comforted me greatly, for it has been a long and hard struggle in Turkey, both on the men's as well as on the women's side, to obtain the rights they now enjoy.

Lahore, more than all other cities, seemed difficult to size up with regard to trends of thought and community divisions. It is predominantly Muslem; but the Muslems are more divided into sections among themselves than elsewhere. One meets the most Orthodox as well as the most dissentient. But outwardly at least there seemed to be mutual courtesy among all sections.

The club of the officials of Lahore gave a dinner, which for the first time admitted native women. The officials wore dinner-jackets, and the guests from outside were in their native costume. Neither was the difference between them due only to costume. It was evident there—and elsewhere—that the official class was not well looked on by the Indians. And I thought this most unfortunate for India. The official class are well-trained and able. A self-governing country must have a well-trained administrative body. And these men were Indians to the core and served their country. How can these officials ever wish for an Independent India if they do not feel themselves trusted by their own people? For the moment the official is internally torn, and finds himself in a false position.

The people of the Punjab are always spoken of as being fiery and apt to exaggerate. But in Lahore one sees so many types that it is difficult to generalize. There are men of titanic dimensions with grave and settled features who rarely smile or talk. There are also diminutive and fussy and bragging types.

A reasonable remark there may be taken quietly and in the spirit it is meant; but it may also call forth a passionate antagonism and make some fly into a towering rage. I must say that it is no sinecure to govern in India, especially in the Punjab.

The next great community in Lahore is that of the Sikhs. Sikhism as a faith is so near Islam in some of its aspects that one cannot pass by without saying something about it. It is one of the signs of the penetration of Islam, of whose strength and power some young Muslims have begun to doubt.

Sikhism rests on the teachings of Ramanand, a Southern

Hindu of the fourteenth century who preached against idolatry and caste. One of his disciples, perhaps the most important because he was a great poet, was a Muslem weaver, Kabir. He is, I believe, considered as the spiritual godfather of the movement. The actual founder of the sect was Nanak. Two outstanding points of the faith are: *Monotheism* and *anti-asceticism*. Men must not accept divine incarnations; men must not live away from society, but live in it and serve their fellow-creatures. The religion had nine Gurus (spiritual leaders) and the tenth incorporated all their teaching into a book (Adi Granth) which has become the Sikh Koran. Sikhs most follow the book and nothing else. Sikhism has no Caste, no idol worship, was against the burning of widows from the very beginning, and enjoins men to live with moderation and restraint. It is also anti-alcoholic.

To the Sikhs the symbol of their unification is the sword. Also every Sikh is a "Singh," which means a lion. In this respect they resemble the Islamites of early days. Though they drifted back into idolatry in 1800, there has since been a reform movement among them. A body of reformers have thrown out all the idols which got into their temples, and have started an educational movement by founding the Khalsa College at Amritsar. The courage of the Sikhs is proverbial, and they have been an important element in the Indian Army. They resist all Caste movements, but they themselves are a Caste. However, although because of their many points in common one might think that the Muslem and the Sikh would understand each other and co-operate, such is not the case. After the Hindu and the Muslem the Sikh may play an important part in future India.

To me Lahore stands between the Frontier and the rest of India, not only geographically but in mentality as well. It contains both, as well as its own peculiarities of thought. Peshawar, which was my next destination, represents what is really the Frontier spirit. The evening I left Lahore there occurred a pleasant little incident which I must mention here.

I dined at the house of a doctor, a member of the Association which had invited me to Lahore. After dinner our host disappeared for a few minutes. When he came back he had a tiny green bundle in his arms. He was a big man, and I shall never forget the tender way he held the precious bundle, and the solemnity with which he laid it on my knees. It was a baby of seven days old—his little daughter—which he asked me to name Halidé. The face as I leaned over it was smaller than the palm of a child. Life moved on its dark silky surface as the early wind breathing on the surface of the waters. She had the long black lashes of the Oriental-woman-to-be. That miniature creature in green silk has moved me almost to tears, and in a strange way tied me to Lahore. For whatever happens in that city the destiny of a human being called Halidé will be affected by it.

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## CHAPTER XII

### Peshawar

HOURS before one reaches Peshawar one is conscious of high altitudes. The sensation of cold, even to shivering, is most enjoyable in India. The scenery at early dawn from the train seemed to me like the Anatolian high plateau. Arid, grey, and rugged to a degree. The moment one leaves the station one sees barracks and soldiers drilling. The battalion marching up and down was composed of men who had something in common with the rugged and simple rocky background behind them. They were well-carved, clean-cut men, and their features were often delicately chiselled. I could at once recognize the frontiersman, that is, the mountain type. One imagined from the expression of their faces that they were in the habit of following a straight and single idea, such as warriors or certain types of leaders of men usually do. No wonder that in the plain some people thought of the frontiersman as having the attributes of a leader. The world, even India, may be too complicated a proposition to be handled by such straightforward mentality. But these men, all the same, had an air of straightforwardness and ability to decide and act quickly; and this stood out in contrast to the complexity and incalculableness of the too-many-sided Indian from below the hills.

I was to be the guest of the late Abdur Rahman Qureshi's family. Before I saw it, the house was already familiar to me. Poor Abdur Rahman had talked of it at Angora when he was homesick; and he had done so in the deep evocative tones which left pictures of his childhood in one's mind. I remem-

bered it all now. He talked of the quarrels and fights of his boyhood with his brothers: that was to tell me of the untamed nature of his mountain people. He also talked of his sisters in a strange protective tone. But the time when his voice was hoarse with tenderness and longing was when he talked of his nurse.

The house, properly speaking, is composed of two separate buildings, both built on a square court, and open in the centre as are most Indian houses. The bigger part belonged to the women, and was of four storeys. Abdur Rahman's nephew, a boy of nine, always helped me to climb the interminable steps. The family had prepared for me a huge room on the fourth storey. From its windows it was good to watch the lights in the windows on the four sides illuminating the court, which appeared like a dark hollow. And the family was all assembled there . . . sisters, relatives, middle-aged and young. The first meeting was intense. The Frontier women seem to be replicas of their men: grave, simple, dignified, and always holding their emotions under control. Yet one could see the pain and longing which my presence awakened for their loved one who had died in such tragic circumstances. Behind those eyes one felt the suppressed tears flowing into their hearts. As I was the only one there who had known Abdur Rahman, and had worked with him in the land of his choice, they considered me as one of them. Without a single word being uttered I had become an elder sister to them all.

The youngest sister, who spoke the most fluent English, took charge of me at once. She would move about noiselessly in my room, and put my things in order. No matter how many servants a family of that sort may have in the East, it is the young members who serve the old. She must have been too young to remember Abdur Rahman before

he had left Peshawar; but her youthful imagination had magnified him into a hero, and she adored his memory. She was a curious mixture of sensibility, strength, and maturity; withal astoundingly cultured, speaking English, Urdu, Persian, in addition to her native tongue, which was Pushtu. She also wrote poetry in Persian, which was difficult to conceive of a girl of twenty. Her name was Naz-Perver (breeder of grace); and grace of a grave and dignified kind marked her every gesture and word. Middle-height, well-built, with an extremely fair skin, and honey-coloured eyes. From beneath her white head-veil a fringe of very fair silky hair caressed her high forehead.

Every night when I was in bed, and every morning before I rose, she would stand by my bed and ask in her quiet tones:

“Do you want your knees to be massaged?”

I never wanted my knees to be massaged; but the question was revealing as to the devotion and the personal service the young give daily to the old. And in that room I saw several times a tall middle-aged woman in black standing by the toilet table, and looking at me, or staring into the air. She had a strange resemblance to Abdur Rahman: the same skin and the fine features which combined strength with sensibility. She never spoke a word. I asked Naz-Perver:

“Who is she?”

“She is his nurse.”

So this was the woman the poor boy carried in his heart during that hard campaign in Angora. And it was evident that she had nothing in her heart but the boy she had nursed. She seemed to me almost like a walking tomb. And the time I felt near letting tears fall was when she walked out of the room. It was the contrast between the back which was regal

in its straightness, and her legs which almost wobbled, indicating the strong emotion of that rock-like body.

Side by side with the women's apartment was another house of two storeys built on a more spacious court, filled with pots of plants and flowers. One passed to it through a door next to the harem door. The other brothers being away, Yunus, a young brother about twenty years old, was my host. A slim, wiry stripling of a lad with laughter in his eyes, and with an open countenance. As a matter of fact, my real host at Peshawar was Sir Abdul Qayyum; for it was at his invitation that I had come to Peshawar to lecture at the Peshawar College, though I would have anyway visited Abdur Rahman's family. He represented the liberal, constitutional, and pro-English side of Peshawar, just as Dr. Abdul-Gaffar, the leader of the "Red Shirts," had represented the revolutionary side. Yet what differentiated the Frontier from other parts was that no matter for what different, even opposing, currents of thought different individuals might stand, they had a strange oneness in being the children of the Frontier. It was only at Peshawar that a stranger never heard one side telling unimaginably unpleasant stories about the other. One can very well see them fighting out issues between them to a finish, in the manner of strong, even violent natures. But when they were facing a stranger they would stand for every section of the Frontier. And this solidarity was carried to its utmost expression; that is, not only between the Muslims who are 92 per cent, but between the Muslims and the Hindus who are 8 per cent. The latter are mostly moneylenders. Elsewhere in India Muslim and Hindu had both spoken of the moneylender with loathing and scorn. Only at Peshawar the men I talked to spoke of the moneylender indulgently, even with slight affection.

"Well, the moneylenders have their use in a community where a banking system is not yet established," they would say good-humouredly. "Where would the man who needs capital be, if there were none to lend him money?"

Whether they were men in the habit of always borrowing money or not, there is no doubt that they meant to stand up for their Hindu moneylending citizens. And after seeing and talking to Peshawaris, I understood why Mahatma Gandhi had a weakness for them in his heart, though he is not permitted to visit them. I also understood why the English have a special liking for them, though their job as governors on the Frontier is perhaps the hardest. I could see that the Frontier had a realism which makes people take a definite attitude towards a given situation; and after taking it makes them stick to it, without murmur. The Frontier was the only place where no one talked of independence and future freedom. Yet each and all gave one the impression of being absolutely free men. And I believe that even if one saw them labouring in chains one would still have that impression.

. . . . .

The drawing-room of the men's apartment is a rectangular spacious place, and furnished in European style.

Sir Abdul Qayyum was there most of the time. A man of seventy, they said. But it was hard to believe it. He was so erect, and his face was so devoid of wrinkles, and his beard so black. Yet all that smoothness did not merely indicate an easy life, one which had had no struggles. He had a certain eagle-like pose, sitting in the armchair in the corner, which made one wonder as to when he would swoop over the room. He spoke in a booming voice, but he was a man of few words.

We were talking of the Frontier tribes who live in no-man's-land. Sir Abdul Qayyum is the leader of some of them, I was told. We were discussing their land system. They redistribute the land every five years. The reason is that in five years some acquire too much land through inheritance, and others lose some of theirs. The principle is to maintain an equalitarian form in land-owning. So the elders of the tribe come together and, if they find it necessary, redistribute the land, equalizing the area held by the different families according to their numbers.

"It is their administrative system which is more interesting," said Sir Abdul Qayyum, and explained how perfect order and security could be established without a police system, provided every man and every community respected the rules of behaviour mutually settled and accepted between them. I understood that all their treaties were "Gentlemen's agreements." There was nothing on paper. But if one had a pass through the territory of a certain chief, one was in absolute safety crossing. The members of the tribes at peace with each other were absolutely safe on each other's lands. In war and in peace their policy was that of honesty. According to one's relation to them one knew where one stood.

Dr. Holdsworth, the Principal of the Peshawar College, who was there in the evenings, asked:

"Khan Sahib, would I be safe if I walked through the territory of one of those tribes alone?"

Sir Abdul Qayyum answered:

"It depends in what capacity. It also depends on the relation of that particular tribe to the English. During the Crimean War, when the English were considered the friend of the Muslem world, every Englishman could pass through, no matter where, in those tribal lands in perfect safety. But in

your case, that is, as the principal of the Peshawar College, you can go anywhere provided that they recognize you."

Both of them smiled a little, amused perhaps for different reasons. It was evident that the College was held in high esteem by the simple tribal folks. I was told that on the College grounds footprints of tribesmen were seen which indicated that they passed through it often, and in numbers, at night. Yet if enemy met enemy on that ground, neither would fire. It was Truce Ground, it was sacred.

I remember the talk, and the two men so different from each other. Sir Abdul Qayyum in his tightly-buttoned black coat and the huge blue-crested white turban; Dr. Holdsworth in his simple European costume. Though the former represented a few tribes, and the latter one of the mightiest Empires of our day, neither side seemed to have a feeling of inferiority or superiority because of that. Both were unconsciously aware of the equality of man as such. And they were as man to man. And it is a mark of the English understanding of people that they have seen no other attitude possible between the frontiersmen, without constant trouble.

Dr. Holdsworth was rather young, but an unusually able educationalist. He was the Englishman at his best. He had been at the head of Harrow, and was a Socialist. He was extremely interesting to talk to, and I believe a man of very strong character and rare intellectual gifts. The hold he had over a thousand Frontier youths was all due to these innate qualities. I have seen him presiding over ceremonies in the College, at a luncheon, at a garden party, and in this house where he is evidently both respected and considered as a friend. In every situation he seemed to possess the right instinct and the right knowledge of the way he had to handle the people he was dealing with.



I stayed in Peshawar three nights and two days. Yet I have the feeling that I was with the Peshawaris for a long time, and got to know them as if they were people of my own country. Especially the evenings when we gathered together and talked in Yunus's room, each moment seemed full of interest, and revealing of the character of the Frontier people. The room was usually full of others, besides the family, some middle-aged and some young. Most of the young people wore European costumes, but for ceremonial purposes they exchanged their hats for the blue-crested white turban. The old wore ordinary turbans, and trousers with loose coats. But it was evident that they did not lay stress on externals. For a young Indian dressed in European costume elsewhere in India was commented upon as uprooted and cosmopolitan. Here it meant nothing. The young rarely talked in the presence of their elders, unless they were asked. But after Sir Abdul Qayyum left, I found they had their own views on every possible question. Here I want to digress and repeat that one must never judge a people from the individual one sees abroad. All these young people had been Abdur Rahman's friends and playfellows. Though there were many points which Abdur Rahman had in common with them, he was in a way nearer to the U.P. men than to his people. He used to talk of religion constantly, and judge everything in its light. Though every Peshawari I met, whether intellectual or educated simply, was a staunch Muslem, he never talked of religion.

I had my meals in the men's side of the house; and there were about twenty men present at every meal. The servants held a basin and towel, and poured water over each person's hands; for all washed carefully before going into the dining-room. Some ate with forks, and some with their fingers.

Just as in the case of dress, the way of eating was also left to personal choice.

Near me sat always a dear old man with a white beard and kind eyes. He was the editor of a native daily. Though perhaps the most aged in that vigorous company, he had a young mind, and took a keen interest in the talk which concerned the day or the morrow; the really old get stuck in what *has been*, and rarely will visualize what *will be*. He told me that henceforth he was going to be a champion of women's emancipation. I liked the way he said it. There was no trace of compliment in it. He looked as if he had really come to a conclusion after observing the success of a certain social experiment.

Yunus and two of his friends took me to see the Khyber Pass. It is a favour to any visitor, for the place has the greatest historical significance to the Peshawaris. Sarojini called it "the road to Destiny," and the young Peshawaris all remembered it. From there the conquering armies had come—and how much they had changed the face of India! To me the great Pass is associated with the flitting vision of a little girl from the Afridi tribe. They were four kiddies, three boys and a girl, running after the rare carriages which passed through, and begging. A puncture had stopped our car, and one of my companions took hold of the girl and dragged her to me, while the other three children followed warily. They were all wearing loose black chemises over their naked bodies, and through the holes a great deal of their flesh was exposed. No one could tell how many coats of dirt covered their faces, for I believe none of them had ever been washed since they were born.

"Meet the little Afridi," said my companion; and I saw a child's face lifted to mine. I had the sensation of having discovered a tiny masterpiece of the best Greek period, which had lain in the dust for thousands of years. No human being has given me such an intense desire to give it a hot bath and scrub it, so that I could see what was beneath. But what one could see through the strata of dirt was enough to give one the idea of what Nature could still do. Lovely blue eyes with long thick black lashes, wide apart; a perfect little nose, and the contour of chin and cheeks most delicately chiselled. The matted hair standing out in tufts and knots showed patches of burnished gold behind the thick mud which clotted it. The boys who stood behind her and held out their palms begging were as ugly as they could be.

The only word my companions could get out of her was her name—Kevser. Though they gave her money and petted her, they were unable to make her smile. She had a hard grim mask, covered with mud. She searched every face, but kept her thoughts to herself. And if one could see the small teeth, as white as ivory, it did not mean a smile at all; the owner gave one the impression of a strange little animal which no one could ever tame.

The Afridis, I understood, were rather wild people, and these children, I presumed, had come into the world and lived just as the lilies of the field.

"What is the explanation of the child's extraordinary beauty?" I asked.

"A handsome ancestor in the army of Alexander the Great," was the answer.

We passed through villages on our way back. They were

all Muslem villages. The sizes of the houses and the comparatively clean streets impressed me. I wanted to see the inside of one of the houses, and we stopped before the biggest of them. We went in and found ourselves in a spacious court. The owner of it received us pleasantly. He was one of the elders of the village, and asked us to sit on the chairs before his house. A high wall divided this part from the women's quarters, and my companions told him that I wanted to visit the women. So we walked towards a door in the high wall, and it was already half open, a veiled face peeping out. There was some talk in Pushtu. I believe she was told that I was a Muslem woman from a far-off land who wanted to see their houses. She at once opened the door wide, and asked me by a gesture to step in.

The inner court was larger, with a one-storeyed house on one side, all the doors of the rooms opening on a porch before them. There were two young women, and an elderly one, who was evidently their mother. It was a perfect pandemonium which we all enjoyed, talking to each other by gestures and sounds. I marvelled at how much one could express oneself without words. I made them understand that I wanted to see their rooms and all that was in them. And they at once took me into the rooms, showing me everything, even the inside of cupboards. They neither questioned the reason, nor seemed to resent the unseemly curiosity. It was enough to be a Muslem and believe in the One God. You were one of them. Never in my life had I such a clear perception of the freemasonic spirit of my religion.

The last room I visited was the kitchen, and an old toothless woman was squatting and cleaning some vegetables. She looked up and smiled very winningly, and they all talked and patted my shoulder, highly pleased with their visitor,

as if she were a whimsical but harmless child instead of an old woman. The whole interior was pleasant, and showed a comfortable, even prosperous, standard for a village. There was even a Singer sewing-machine.

My hostesses rubbed their hands together, and indicated that there was nothing more to see. Then one of them brought a chair and sat on it; another pretended to bring her something on a tray; all the three pretended to sip something, smacking their lips; and all of them said "Chai." It meant that I must sit there and drink tea with them, and perchance eat something. I know how particular villagers are about offering something to drink and eat to their visitors. But I looked at my watch and felt that I must fly. For I had to take lunch at the College, give two lectures there on the same afternoon, attend a garden party, and visit several meetings of Purdah women. I tried to explain with the two words, school and women, and took leave of them. They all stood under the massive door opening to the men's court and waved me good-bye.

Dr. Holdsworth, after introducing me to the audience, said: "Now Koran-i-Sherif will be chanted," and we all rose. It is the custom in all Islamic Colleges to have verses from the Koran chanted before the speaker begins his speech. And I had noticed that the choice of these verses was significant, each institution selecting those verses which had—consciously or unconsciously—something to do with their aims and mentality. From that Frontier college I remember two verses which somehow fitted with their general attitude towards life; simple, but wise and workable. They were "Reselhik-mete-Mehafetullah," and "La yukellifullahe-nefsen vusaaha"

(meaning "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord," and "Allah proposes nothing which is beyond the strength of man").

From the platform I could see the thousand students in their tight black coats and blue-crested snowy turbans. They were all tall, wiry, with lean faces and striking features. The blue crest gave them a somewhat cocky air, which fitted with the strength and determination of their looks; and the easy way they stood or sat made one think of them as clean-living men, true to their words and uncompromising in questions of human decency and dignity. That meant really fear of the Lord. And the lack of negative mysticism and exaggerated asceticism made one suppose that all of them would retain their place in life, and never abandon their fellow-creatures because of the hardness of their duties. It all indicated that they lived reasonably, obeying the rules of health, restraining themselves from all excesses, but never denying or violating the laws of Nature. It seemed to me that they had the true interpretation of the "Allah proposes nothing which is beyond the strength of man."

I want to digress and confess to an incurable weakness for extreme puritanism, even for asceticism. Yet I know that they often lead to hypocrisy and intolerance in the first instance; and to self-righteousness, or withdrawal of the best moral element from human intercourse in the second. But on the other hand the tendency to hedonism at times carries human beings to such unbridled indulgence of the senses that there seems to be little to choose between a man of the cave who has taken up the extreme monastic asceticism, and the man who, through gloating on vice and overdone pleasure, turns into a disgustingly ugly sight. Though the hermit is the better sight, the best is the man who has taken the middle

course. And that middle course is "Allah proposes nothing which is beyond the strength of man." Thinking of that on the platform I fully realized for the first time that in Islam there is no dualism, and that man must harmonize his body and soul in all his actions. And the significance of Islamic prayer, the co-operation of the body with the soul when one stands before one's Creator, took a special significance in my mind.

Let it not be understood that on the Frontier no one is fanatical and extreme in mind, or with no weakness for the excesses of the flesh. Though I have not come across an example of the second kind, the first kind I met in that very audience. Among those who asked me questions after the lecture there was a tiny man in European clothes who made a violent speech against Turkish women; or rather against the pictures of certain women he had seen in some native paper. They wore short skirts and had no veils over their heads, he said. "We Pathans are not going to stand for that sort of Muslem dress in any Muslem community," he cried out. I do not know what he proposed to do about it; but as a lecturer I had to answer him, and tell how and why we have given up the Purdah. After me one of the Professors spoke at some length, and with rare knowledge, about the origin of Purdah and its moral significance, rather than its sartorial necessity. There was no doubt about the preference of the majority in that audience. They all wished to retain the moral significance of the veil, that is, the sacredness of women, their chastity; but as to what sort of clothes women wore—as long as it was not an exhibition and exploitation of sex—they did not care. That the student element was anyway against Purdah was evident from the fact that they had elected the speaker—an emancipated woman—a life member of their Union.

Walking to Dr. Holdsworth's house where I had to rest for an hour before the second lecture, one of the students said:

"That man could not have been a Pathan—who has ever seen such a puny Pathan."

At the garden party, after the second lecture, a charming Englishwoman said to me:

"It would be worth while to come all the way from England to see that little man smashed from that platform." I could see that she would stand no nonsense in regard to women's rights. And all of us enjoyed that garden party, for the Frontier people unconsciously confer life and gaiety on their surroundings. As to the several meetings with Purdah women, I could say the same thing I have said about Lahore Muslem women. From generation to generation their views about women's place in life changed, some being ripe for emancipation, some too old and too set to leave their old ways of life. Two days after I left Peshawar I read in the papers that Peshawar had formed a League for the Abolition of Purdah. I somehow felt sure that my nice old man, the editor who sat by me at the meals in Abdur Rahman's house, had something to do with it.





## CHAPTER XIII

### Lucknow

ON my way to Lucknow I thought of Sarojini Naidu. Whenever she spoke of the city, she shook her head, and exclaimed: "Ah, the Begams of Lucknow, the Begams of Lucknow!"

"What are they like, Sarojini?"

"Haven't you seen any?"

I had. One was Professor Mujeeb's wife. A young person in her early twenties, but grave enough to be fifty. Handsome, stately, taciturn, with a face in perpetual repose. Very fair, too. Were the Begams of Lucknow like her?

Then there was my little friend Shakira, Professor Mujeeb's sister. One called her little, not because of her diminutive stature, but because of a way she had with her. A tiny brunette with eyes of fire, sparkling wit, and a joyousness which was contagious. Yet one knew that she had an extremely sensitive nature, and a capacity for suffering. However, to everyone she seemed always gay, and intensely alive to whatever was going on round her. Nothing used to happen in Delhi from palace to hut which she did not know, and which she could not describe vividly. If one could call what she described gossip, one must also admit that she conferred elegance and style on it. And she had a laugh! Unlike any I have ever heard, both in sound and quality. It was a warm and husky sound which came from her heart. The moment it rang in one's ears one laughed, whether one understood what she was saying or not. Were the Begams of Lucknow like her? Whatever they looked like, their city I thought of as a centre of fair Begams and artists; for Lucknow is the

place of Mogul painting and art. Didn't Sarajini Naidu say, "In Lucknow and in Hyderabad you have Muslem culture in its essence."

The house where I was going to stay was called "Dali-Bag" (Dolly's Garden), and was named after some fair English-woman of bygone days; and it belonged to Mujeeb's brother, so he was coming with me. I started in a happy mood, and Mujeeb's companionship was both valuable and enjoyable. I owe a great deal of my understanding (such as it is) of India to him. Further, he looks very much like one of my sons, so I have adopted him as my spiritual Indian son. But he was not enthusiastic about his city. "Ah, it is a sleepy old place," he used to say; from which remark one could deduce that Lucknow was immune from the fever of the new life which throbs so disturbingly in every other Indian city.

Houses have the composite soul of their inhabitants. Show me the home of a person and I will tell you the kind of person he is. That is why the houses where I have stayed seem to me like so many clues to Indian character: that is why I describe them at some length for my readers.

Dali-Bag is built on spacious grounds. On one side is a typical English lawn, beautifully mown, and green. On the other side is a rose garden, an orchard; and, I believe, a vegetable garden behind the buildings. The house is built on the eastern side, opposite the rose garden. The entrance is under an arch, and stone steps lead up to the door. One enters a hall, which is both large and comfortably furnished. It is divided from the dining-room by a screen. One gets a sense of a numerous family of all ages living amicably and happily together. While it is not disorderly, one knows that it is a

place where the inmates live freely, and can move furniture about to suit their own convenience. At the sides of this hall there are apartments, opening on to verandahs.

From the left side of the hall a winding staircase, something like that of a minaret, leads up to the third storey, which is the top-storey as well. The suite of rooms I occupied was there. They opened on to a roof-garden, and to a verandah overlooking the rose garden. My favourite place was the roof-garden, where I could sit and gaze at Lucknow. It is not only the city of winsome and fetching Begams, but also of lovely gardens and orchards, which gird the city like a luscious green belt.

As one goes round the house and gets acquainted with its inmates, one says, "The West must have entered this house long, long ago. What it has left is no longer a borrowed habit, or a piece of meaningless furniture, but is blended with the East and has become a part of the whole."

Some fifty people live in that house, people of three generations. The master of the house is Mr. Wasim, Mujeeb's eldest brother. He has a great deal in common with his sister, Shakira. The same vital and human interest in people round him, the same ability to be amused and to amuse. He also has the same ringing, contagious laugh. Though an excellent lawyer and an extremely able business man, he is as simple and as affectionate as a child, in private life. One gets that from his manner and the tone of his voice; also in the way the youngsters treat him, lovingly and as if he were of the same age.

He has a father who lives in the same house. The old gentleman belongs to the oldest generation; but Mr. Wasim is the master, because his father has abrogated his rights as the head of the family. When I say Mr. Wasim is the master, it is only

to show his official rank in the hierarchy of the family, which is numerous enough to be called a clan. Otherwise the master-mistress of the house, and of him as well, is Begam Wasim.

I knew of the father through Mujeeb, who was extremely devoted to him and spoke of him often. I knew that the old gentleman was keenly interested in young India, though he had retired from active life because of age and failing sight. He was sensitive to whatever was said about India, which he loved as passionately as any young patriot, and he believed in its future. He had read Catherine Mayo's book on India; and, though it had shocked him, it had also made him see the necessity for change more fully.

Though he rarely left his room and did not appear in company often, he honoured me by coming down and being photographed in a family group. He had the composure, the quiet dignity of the educated high-class Turk of forty years ago, a fragile person impeccably dressed in a European suit and a red fez. Neat, elegant, and with the courtesy and gravity which mark the gentleman whether East or West. What struck me most in him was the way in which he had followed the march of time, and without bitterness accepted some of its verdicts, and with a sense of proportion which did not make the change look like a cheap imitation, or a weakness for fashion. There was no doubt about the high respect in which he was held; not only because of his age, which in itself is enough to command respect in the East, but because of his character and excellent judgment. And this grand old gentleman was the only person whom Mr. Wasim did not dare to embrace in public, though he looked as if he would have liked to.

Begam Wasim's mother was the old gentleman's sister; everyone is everyone's cousin, niece, sister, aunt, uncle,

etc., in that family. She is also of his generation, but not of his age; for she was, and will be to the end of her life, never older than fifteen. A slim willowy figure, as swift in movement and as gay and quick in repartee as any of her granddaughters. She used to wear loose white trousers and white chemises, and her head was enveloped in a white veil from under which wisps of grey hair flew about. Her face was small, with a wide forehead and the most delicate chin. Though her face was wrinkled all over, the youthful leanness of the contours of chin and cheeks made her look like a little girl who wrinkles her nose in order to look funny. She had bright nut-brown eyes, and was always on the go, skipping along from one side of the house to the other: such a flitting vision of vitality and cheerfulness that young and old ran after her, embraced her, or at least smiled at her as one would to a winsome child.

"Mother," said her son-in-law, squeezing the little old face whenever he could catch her, and kissing her hands, "where is the Kavalli to-day?" Kavalli is religious Muslem music played and sung by a band of musicians. She loved it passionately. Music seemed to be in her blood; one could see it from the quick tempo of her walk, and the rhythm of her whole slim person. She never missed a musical gathering, I was told.

The next generation, consisting of the progeny of these two attractive old people included Begam Wasim, her husband, and his brother and sister. But Begam Wasim, besides her very marked personality, had brothers who must be introduced also; for the youthful old lady conferred either personality or a marked talent on everyone of them.

First Begam Wasim:

She and her father-in-law seemed to me the only grown-

ups in that happy family. She was the motive power and the responsible director of all the affairs in that vast household. Though delicate in health, she continued doing her domestic as well as her social duties. She had immense love for everyone in the house, and I often saw her smile at them indulgently and with secret amusement. She ran that house admirably, for I know that the more servants there are the harder it is to organize. Meals were regular, service excellent, and everyone was looked after. Yet there seemed to be artistry as well as ability in Begam Wasim's housekeeping, for one never sensed any deliberate effort about it all.

In person she was extremely good to look at. Tall, slender, with a refined and slightly humorous face; and always in beautiful clothes. An excellent mother of six children, mostly boys, she did not need to train them beyond being an example, and inspiring a deep affection and admiration in them all. Besides her own children, there were nephews, nieces, and their friends: quite a crowd of young people who were under her care, and lived most of their time in her house. In the East I have rarely seen this combination of camaraderie as well as respect between mother and children.

As a hostess she was perfect. Her drawing-room was full in the afternoons, and every evening there were quite a number of guests of high society. She spoke perfect English, and the grace with which she handled her guests or led the conversation made one wonder how a woman who was in Purdah so long could do it so naturally.

One of her brothers is a well-known painter of the classic Mogul school. He lives in a charming, old-fashioned house outside the city, but he is often Begam Wasim's guest. He never talked, but from the samples of his work I have seen

I could not doubt of his talent. His masterpiece, which he had not yet completed, was a "Kavalli" gathering. Musicians and singers in a group. No wonder; it is what his mother loves best, and it dominates her son's fertile imagination.

Another brother is Haliq Zaman. I knew him in his extreme youth, when he came to Turkey as a young member of the Indian Red Crescent, after the Balkan War. He played important parts in both the Khilafat and the Nationalist movements. He still seems to me a man with a political future. He has both the mind and the character necessary for such a career.

Then there is the youngest brother, Dr. Salim Zaman, Shakira's husband, who lives at Delhi. He is a first-rate chemist, I am told. But what interests me most is that he is an original and talented painter of the New School. Each time I visited his house at Delhi the sketches and the paintings on the walls of his bungalow fascinated me. They are utterly different from those of his brother. But he himself is also different, being a fair representative of his contemporaries, filled with restlessness and discontent. One felt from his work the painful consciousness of confusion and contradictory problems which besets the world. The heads of his women had crooked mouths, distorted with the suffering and despair which take hold of people in a transitional age. There was a blind beggar among them.<sup>1</sup> The expression of the closed eyes with their sightless

<sup>1</sup> The sketch was inspired by Rainer Marian Rilke's *Das Lied des Blinden*:

I am blind: ye outside, it is a curse,  
an abomination, a contradiction,  
something heavy, day after day  
I put my hand on my woman's arm,  
my greyish hand on her greyish grey  
and she leads me through an endless empty way.

[Footnote continued on page 164]



anguish, the movement of his cane in search of direction, seemed to me a true symbol of the young generation. But his masterpiece was the portrait of his mother. It stood above the harassing symbols of the son's confused time as a symbol of the wholesome and the natural which light the lives of the young.

The third generation consists of the daughters, nieces, and little sons of Begam Wasim. They often came to my room; sometimes to ask me if I needed their help, sometimes to talk for a few minutes. They wore bright-coloured trousers and blouses, their young heads always covered with some flimsy, hand-embroidered veil, their braids of long hair and the ends of the veil flying about as they came in and went out with the suddenness and swiftness which characterizes their graceful and youthful granny.

That is the family I am staying with. Besides the Begams of Lucknow represented in that household I have seen others, as guests or at meetings.

From larger groups one got still a better sense of their particular grace. There was a big garden party on Begam Wasim's close-mown lawn. A few hundred of them moving about or sipping their tea. And another garden party of the clubs, where they sat and watched young girls dancing on a platform. And there was the meeting where I had to speak to women. It was in an old palace. A huge hall bathed in light, and they sat, row upon row, in their hundred-coloured

You move and make way and think, you alone  
do not sound like stone on stone,  
but you are wrong: I, only I  
live and lament and suffer.  
In me there is an endless cry  
and I do not know, is it my  
heart crying or my intestine.

draperies all embroidered in gold or silver. A girl in black and white sat on a floor-cushion and played the sitar. Then there was my visit to the mother of the Rajah of Mahmudabad. He was among the friends of Mr. Wasim, and he had asked me after a dinner in his palace whether I would go and visit his mother who never left her residence. I did so with Begam Wasim; and in another big and beautiful palace lived the old lady of the oldest, almost extinct age. Her daughters-in-law and her waiting-women moved about under splendid chandeliers in their dazzling draperies, and brought in tea and refreshments; but they retired the moment their husbands entered, or their husbands waited until they had left the room before entering the old lady's presence. It was the old custom that no son could appear before his mother together with his wife. Going from Begam Wasim's house to that strange palace gave one a curious confused sense of East and West, mingled according to the mentality of the inmates of each place. Yes, Lucknow was a city of fair Begams and the East of fairy stories still lingered. Yet that was not the only side of it.

There was the women's college and the girls' school. There was that assembly of professional women to whom I had to talk. I remember them as they sat, Begam and Shrimati (Hindu Mrs. and Miss), simple and business-like, brows contracted with thought, all ready to go to some office after the talk. My association with that side of women's life was through Shr. Lakshmi Menon, a youthful Hindu woman with the usual red mark on her bronzed forehead. Though she was in the turmoil of an active modern life, with its social service and professional activities, still she had her own feminine charm and character, not at all inferior to the fascinating, fairy-like Begams. And behind the façade of women's assem-

blies, and of men's assemblies, too, at the Municipality Hall, I could see that Mujeeb was wrong in calling Lucknow a sleepy place. The feverish beat of new life with all its complications was throbbing there as disturbingly as it does elsewhere in India.

The honourable Sheikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai of Gadia, a famous public figure of Lucknow, must be presented. There are others equally important for India perhaps, in that city, but the Sheikh is an aggrandized version of the Muslem of yesterday, of to-day, and in certain ways of to-morrow. He is representative of so many forms and aspects of Indian life that from him one gets as good an impression as from any one of the many-sidedness of India, and the way contradictory trends blend with each other.

The Sheikh is a man of sixty, tall and robust-looking, with bright and piercing eyes which contrast strangely with his venerable grey beard. He is dressed like Maulana Shaukat Ali, my friend, the "Big Brother." Hence, externally, he is the Pan-Islamist. All Muslem peoples, Turk, Arab, Persian, Afghan, etc., interest him as keenly as do his own people. He has also worked and helped them all, considering their affairs as his own. What he has done for Turkey when that country was in trouble we will leave out here. Suffice it to say he was an active member of the Khilafat movement, and for that was banished from his country for a time.

In India the Sheikh's name has also appeared in connection with all sorts of political movements. He belongs to no party, but he has been identified with the policy of almost all of them. He is a Nationalist, too. But as it has already been suggested, his Nationalism does not divorce him from his

communal sympathies. He has, however, co-operated with Hindus on national issues in regard to Indian Swaraj (Independence), especially during the time of Non-co-operation. He has even given up his practice at the bar when asked to do so. In this connection he was a partisan of Mahatma Gandhi as long as Non-co-operation lasted. But when Mahatma Gandhi stopped the movement, declaring that Indians were not yet ready to carry out a political movement which uncompromisingly insisted on non-violence, Sheikh Mushir Kidwai joined the critics of Mahatma Gandhi and condemned him. But even when he was opposing Mahatma Gandhi, he paid him the following tribute:

"There was really no mass movement before the Non-co-operation Movement . . ." he said, and went on to tell how for the first time a sense of nationhood had entered the humblest hut, thanks to the Mahatma. But the Sheikh's assumption was that the Indians should not delay their struggle for Independence until a time when their social, educational, and economic problems would be solved. For him Swaraj was to be the façade, and all the rest would follow, being secondary. This point is important to note, for it stands in opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's present view of "changing the mind" by training and educating the masses in moral, social, and economic fields before pushing them into a political mass movement.

The Sheikh, in collaboration with Hasrat Mohani, founded the All-Indian Non-Communal Independent Party, the aim of which was to create in the Indian a political sense, as distinct from the social and religious. The Sheikh's approach to Independence was through economics. He believed that Labour was the only instrument through which India could obtain Independence. He said:

"If India's intelligent people had taken into their heads to learn practical sciences instead of Milton and Shakespeare, they could have certainly succeeded in improving the industries of the country in the last thirty or forty years, that is, within the time they have become self-conscious and begun their struggle for Home Rule. . . ."

This aspect of him naturally made him a strong Swadeshist; that is, one who believes in national industries and an exclusive use of home-made things. Therefore we find him a strong advocate of boycotting foreign goods, and also an upholder of Mahatma Gandhi in his attempt to nationalize industry. Yet, though the Sheikh agreed with Mahatma Gandhi in principle, he disagreed with the way the Mahatma proposed to work it out. Mahatma Gandhi was, and is, for hand-made goods, as against machine-made: the Sheikh believes in factories and machines, briefly in mechanized industry. That is another point to note in the internal policies of Indians with regard to the economic development of their country. That industry should be home-made all agree; as to whether it should be a hand-made and mostly restricted to villages or machine-made and left to factories, such as is done in Japan, there are differences of opinion.

Another contradictory aspect of the Sheikh is that he is strongly inclined to Socialism, though his Socialism is derived from Islam. In his book entitled *Islam and Socialism*, his principal points are:

"To us Muslems, Socialism means an organized, continuous and harmonious co-operation of individuals with a view to securing universal well-being and general prosperity."

Mr. Wasim is a landlord who owns considerable lands. He told me that he got nothing from them, and that if he did not have his property in the city and his very prosperous practice as a lawyer his family would starve. For the moment I could not understand why a landowner got nothing out of his land. But I was grateful for the opportunity it gave me to see some of the villages near Lucknow; for I had been told that the villages round there were among the poorest. Those we visited were mostly Hindu.

When we entered the village Begam Wasim said that I could choose any house which I wanted to see; and I pointed to a small, isolated hut at the entrance.

The owner was standing at the door, and seemed very willing to show us his house. I could not understand the talk he had with Begam Wasim, but as he was typical of the thousands I have seen I took good note of him.

He was a thin and feeble-looking middle-aged person, with nothing on his emaciated body but a loincloth. Every bone in his body could be counted, and his knees were wobbly, as if they were unable to stand the weight of his body. The face was equally emaciated, with protruding eyes, strangely dull and lifeless. Their look was not altogether unfamiliar—an exaggerated fatalism—and I know how fatalists look. The utter despair of those eyes was due to a belief in the inevitability of continuous misery. His Adam's apple worked up and down as he talked, and his voice was tired and slightly hoarse. I cannot call it whining, for he seemed past the stage when people want to excite pity and exploit it. His tone and the general appearance of his body denoted a perpetual exhaustion due to perpetual undernourishment.

Inside the door there were a tiny court and three small, dark rooms. In the court sat a woman who had some sort of

rags to cover her body. Two boys with loin-cloths, younger replicas of the father, were also sitting there. Between the three they were scrubbing and cleaning two copper dishes in which they may have eaten something. I say they may have, for the family looked as if it had not had anything which could be called a meal for years. The pathetic resignation, apathy written all over them, made one think of them as having lost the faculty of feeling even hunger. Constant semi-starvation does that to people, devitalizing their whole being, dulling all their senses and reactions.

The only things which the family owned were those two copper dishes. I went into the rooms . . . sort of rooms. They had no windows and no floors, and not a single article of use or bedding. On the earth were a few handfuls of straw which were used as beds. Other than their loin-cloths and the rags which covered the woman, that family did not own a single garment. We walked out.

There have been a few occasions when I have thought that talk about the Spirit or anything which was not the human body, superfluous. They have always been when I was face to face with great material misery. This time the feeling was complete. I wondered why the man bothered about being polite to us, going around with us and showing even friendliness when even the uttering of a single word was the outcome of infinite effort. I don't think anyone visiting that house after a good meal could help feeling strangely ashamed. And the shame is still with me quite often when I partake of some good dish and enjoy it.

A little further, by a dirty village pond, there were children. All were naked; all had swollen tummies and some sort of skin disease. They moved about sluggishly, their inconceivably thin legs wobbling like empty rubber tubes, and their backs

already bent; and they took no interest in the visitors. But the sight which held me most was a sitting baby. Its tummy was twice as big as its body, and the body itself was a pack of bones. It had stretched its legs in the dust, and it was looking up at the sky. Its eyes fascinated me. Not a flicker of interest in them for its surroundings, but that look of a creature which has done with life, and knows that its minutes are numbered. And that was only a baby, on the threshold of life. . . . I don't think this baby had the strength to cry, no matter how much hurt it might be. As to laughing . . . well, that must have been an unheard sound where it lived.

There were other houses slightly better than the first one; that is, one could see something which looked like a bed, and there were a few rags and more copper dishes. The house that looked most prosperous had a court behind it, and a kind of half-covered building. On its whitewashed wall was a primitive drawing of an unprepossessing and awesome face. While I was looking at it a woman shrieked, and opening her arms shut out the vision. Begam Wasim told me that the picture was their god, and that the woman was shocked to see a Muslem infidel look at it.

That village gave me unpleasant thoughts about the species to which I was sorry and ashamed to belong. Such sights wipe out all love and pity for a humanity which tolerates this sort of misery. And the sight sobered me so much that for a long time, no matter how I tried to recall the thousand kindnesses I had received and the matchless beauty I had seen in India, they seemed unable to blot out from my mind the baby by the pond, gazing at an empty sky.



Supposing that the greatest part of Indian humanity lives that sort of life . . . then what a mockery to talk about communalism, nationalism, or any "ism" at all. And how strange that I became aware of *the problem* which matters most in India in that fair city of Lucknow. The problem took on quite a different aspect from one seen in books and heard in talks. So this was the 90 per cent of the population of 350 million souls, most of whom live more or less in this way. And if that is the case, if 90 per cent of any humanity lives in the way I have seen in those villages, then it spells sure catastrophe for the future of such a country. And the situation interested the writer more than it would a Western observer; for the crucial problem, the axle around which life revolves in the East, is still the village.

One can present the Indian rural situation to the ordinary reader on India briefly as follows:

Though the land system varies throughout India, the two principal are the Zemindari (the landlord), and the Ryotwari (the peasant-proprietor) systems. The villages I saw in Northern India are all under the Zemindari system. There the peasant is a tenant, pays rent and, in some cases, is subject to eviction. Zemindar (the landlord) owns all the land; and it is he who pays the land revenue to the State. Not very different from the Russian system before the reforms.

All conquerors must naturally have upheld the Zemindari system. First, because it is easier and needs a restricted and simple administrative machine to deal with the land revenue. Further, each conquest creates new landlords, and thereby creates a small landed minority who are tied to the conquerors by ties of interest. But the Zemindari system has not remained simple; that is, with one landlord and intermediary between the State and the cultivator. It has become an

infinitely complicated affair. The land is divided into different parts, subdivisions within subdivision, each part having a different landlord and intermediary, and each part tied to the one above. I was told that in some cases there were as many as *two hundred and eighty* intermediaries and minor landlords, between the cultivator and the State. All this crowd of intermediaries naturally have nothing to do with the land. They sublet their areas, and live on the labour of the lowest link in the chain; that is, the cultivator. This system permits no personal interest in the landlord whose only connection with the land is the rent he must receive from below and pay to the one above him in the chain. As a matter of fact the situation is such that most of these landlords get nothing out of the land, while the labourer himself is condemned to semi-starvation. There are many reasons for the appalling misery of the cultivators themselves.

(1) When there was plenty of land and few cultivators the result was low rent; but during the last century and a half the rural population has doubled. It has gone up from 150 millions to approximately 350 millions. Therefore with the increase of land-hunger the rent has gone up very high. And it is good to remember that the increase in population does not signify prosperity or even good health. Not necessarily. What is certain is that the lower the standard of living, the greater the increase. Just as slum populations have a tendency to increase in the intensely industrialized cities, so the slum-village populations also have increased in India.

(2) The greater part, almost the whole of industry in India used to belong to villages, but with the advent of a swift mechanized industrialization and the flooding of the markets by foreign cheap machine-made goods, village industries have died out, and with them the additional livelihood of the

peasant. So a population of 150 millions which had twice as much land, paid half the rent, and made money out of hand-made industries, is now 350 millions on the same land, paying twice as much rent, and having no additional income.

Even to be able to live from hand to mouth and pay the rent they have to go to the moneylenders, who are human sharks all the world over. So this rapid Westernization, which has no doubt benefited the country in many ways, has been an unmitigated curse for the peasant. Again one comes back to the question: "What sort of India would there have been if the Western rulers had given their energy and applied their science to the benefit of the peasant, instead of heaping it on the middle classes or the ruling class?"

Sir Henry Maine, in his *Village Communities in the East and West*, says: "The most beneficent systems of government in India have always been those which have recognized the peasant as the basis of administration."

But has there been any Government in India or in the East in general, which has recognized the peasant as the basis of its administration? Let us leave the question unanswered, and come to another aspect of the rural problem—land tax as collected under Hindu, Muslem, and British regimes.

Land-revenue, such as it is in India, was embodied in the Sacred Law of Hinduism. Muslem conquerors accepted it, and the British rulers have preserved it with certain alterations. The peasant had to cultivate the land and pay a share of the gross product to the King. So the origin of the land-revenue is the King's share.

In Hindu times the King's share of the gross product of the land was one-sixth. That was what was claimed. But the scanty records left show that it was nearer one-half than one-sixth.

Muslem records are precise. There the ordinary standard

was between one-half and one-third, and, in exceptional cases, one-fourth. Great Britain inherited the one-half, and continued that rate. But the one-half which appears too high in the Muslem period, when the peasant paid half the rent he does now, and controlled the market by his hand-made goods, appears immeasurably higher when the rent is doubled, and the peasant has no additional income.

Vera Ansty, in her article on "Population, Poverty, and the Drain,"<sup>1</sup> gives us a pretty accurate idea of the standard of living of the Indian peasant. She takes the years 1919-1920 which were average seasons. The main foodstuffs available for human consumption in India per head and per day, she tells us, were on a par with the diet provided by *relief works during famine time*, and this without allowing for inequality of distribution and bad seasons. The writer has not seen a bad season, but she has a pretty good idea about the distribution. There are the villages of the Frontier which live on a decent scale; there are also the rich who live in luxury. So the standard of living of the bulk of the peasants could not be any better than the one I have seen in the village near Lucknow.

These being the sober facts in the villages subject to the Zemindari system, I imagined that the Ryotwari system, that is, under the peasant landholder, must be better. And the South, I am told, has the Ryotwari system, but I have not visited the South. But from what I heard and read on the subject it seems that the peasant landholder does not fare any better than the rent-paying cultivator. The reason is that the holdings are too small to maintain a family, even at a low standard. So the semi-starvation goes on. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Modern India: A Co-operative Study*, by Sir G. Cumming; Oxford University Press, 1932.

The labouring population, rural or otherwise, are given as these:

(1) Cultivators who own or rent the land are 55 per cent of the whole population.

(2) Landless agriculturists, unskilled labourers, beggars, are 30 per cent of the whole population.

(3) Industrial workers, including coolies, are 10 per cent of the whole population.

The standard of living of the first two classes are, with little exception, the lowest imaginable. The workers and coolies are not better off. So it follows that 95 per cent of India is semi-starving in order to keep the 5 per cent middle-class, rulers, or whatever else they may be.

I left the fair city of Lucknow with infinitely less gaiety of heart than when I entered it. Fate had thrust before me the darkest side of this country and its people, which I had learned to love most, in Lucknow of all places!

## CHAPTER XIV

## Benares

My visit to Benares was to be devoted to rest and sight-seeing. Mujeeb was my escort; and Dr. Bhagavan Das offered us hospitality. Dr. Bhagavan Das himself could not leave Delhi, but his son and his granddaughters were living in his house at Benares, and kindly consented to put us up.

This was my first venture into a Hindu house which has remained entirely true to tradition. Dr. Bhagavan Das and his family live like real Hindus—illimitably free in mind, but observing all the rules and regulations of their creed in their daily life.

Again, it is the house which first absorbed my attention. But one should say houses, rather, for there were four different houses for different uses in the big garden enclosed by high walls. At the entrance was a trellis. Was it wisteria? Were most of the trees in the garden acacias? What were the colours and the names of the flowers which had such a discreet and delicate smell? I don't know. The moment I crossed the gate I was in the garden of my childhood. Whether it was a trick of memory or a reality, the trees were all acacias, the trellises were wisteria, the flowers the same as my grandmother grew in her garden at Beshiktash. Even the modest fountain before the main building had two small lions in marble, sitting on their curled tails, grinning absurdly while their mouths spouted water.

The central house was evidently only for Dr. Bhagavan Das's use. On the left was the one where his son and his granddaughters lived; at the back were two more houses, their

windows muffled by leaves and flowers. In one of them Mujeeb was housed. I myself was given a room in the central house where no one lived. I had a small bedroom at the back, one of its doors opening on to the verandah, and the other on to a corridor leading to a bathroom.

"You could smear the boards with honey and lick it," they say in my country when they want to describe extreme cleanliness in a house. There was not a square inch on the scrubbed boards, stone floors or carpets of that house where you could not have licked honey. The evocation of the atmosphere of my early life was so intense that I could actually close my eyes and pat the copper tumblers on a shelf in the corridor, believing that I was touching my grandmother's tumblers.

I would have preferred to carry away with me no other memory but the atmosphere of that house, just as I would have preferred to carry away from Lucknow no other memory but the delight of the fair Begams offered to my eyes. But though inseparable from persons and life itself, houses are only the backgrounds. Everywhere a rich and disturbing variety of events, peoples, and thoughts assails one in an Indian house. So much so that it becomes almost impossible to sort out the most important, and present them to one's readers.

Dr. Bhagavan Das's son was a darker version of Bhulabhai Desai, both in dress and looks. Strangely enough he had the same quality of voice and the selfsame simplicity of manner. He had a touching admiration for his illustrious father, without having any pretensions to the metaphysical intellectuality of the older man. But he was a blessing to his surroundings because of his innate restfulness and unobtrusive kindness. And this man in the early forties I am sure behaved like a

dutiful little boy before his father, and demanded in turn the same attitude from his own children.

In the central house there was a spacious room in the front opening on to the terrace with the pond and the lions. One could sit at the door under wide eaves, breathe the air, and watch the familiar garden. The room itself was furnished in native style, austerity and beauty combined. A large divan, Dr. Bhagavan Das's books on shelves, his desk, and a picture of Annie Besant on the wall above. For me she was a disturbing element. For the reforms and changes among Hindus beginning forty years ago are connected with her and her personality in one way or other; and I was in no mood for anything but eternal stability and peace in that house. But the mood, of course, did not alter my admiration for that extraordinary woman, more of a hurricane than a human being. How many sides she had! Metaphysical, intellectual, political, mystical. . . . She loomed over all the activities of those early reform days, and has stamped them with her personality. Yet she stood up for everything that was Hindu, even for what was whimsical and irrational. She was there to revive and to point out the beauty of old traditions and thoughts which a rapid Westernization was destroying fast. Yet she had also tried to bring about change. "She has given us confidence in ourselves and in our old civilization," say some Hindus. "She has retarded our progress, puffed us with pride and made us stick to what are absurd obstacles to progress and change," say others.

There was a commotion outside, in the garden. Muejeeb came in and told me that Babu Shiva Prasad had come, or



rather had been brought to see me. For he cannot use his feet easily after a stroke which he had in prison.

I rose and saw two men deposit a sedan-chair on the terrace, and from it rose a titanic figure leaning on two sticks. A leonine head, flowing white beard, locks like the prophets of old, and features cast in the same generous mould, strength, passion, and endurance written all over him. But it was his eyes which held anyone who met him for the first time. Black, childish, full of enthusiasm and tenderness.

Babu Shiva Prasad is a multi-millionaire, I am told. But he lives as a poor Indian, both in dress and manner of life. His millions are spent on helping the older educational institutions or on founding new ones. His stately houses are also given away. He considers his wealth as a trust held for the people. All that he owns belongs to the people, as well as himself. And he has the kind of imagination which sees the impossible realized. Just as Jules Verne imagined submarines and aeroplanes—mere fantasies in his time—so Babu Shiva Prasad imagines a free, a united and great India. Though these seem like fantasies now, who can affirm that they do not have as much chance of being realized as Jules Verne's fantasies? Isn't the entire Universe created in the imagination of One Divine Power, and aren't all changes constant creations and recreations of man's imagination? How does Babu Shiva Prasad want to bring about a united and free India? He believes that the only obstacle to freedom is the lack of unity among Indians. He believes that this lack of unity is due to religious differences. So with childlike simplicity and directness he attempts to remove it. How?

If religion separates, it can also unite. So he thought, and was therefore building a New Temple in Benares. It was to have no god or goddess, but India's Map as the supreme deity.

A marble bas-relief with India's mountains, rivers, lakes, and cities carved on it. It was being built during my visit, and there were many artists and artisans of India who were carving India's new god on marble. Four Vedas were being chanted daily; and Muslems, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, etc., were asked to fill the shrine with their own prayers before the Temple would be open to worshippers.

The interest of this attempt did not lie in its originality. Original it was not. To the Westerner it would look like an Eastern and symbolic interpretation of geographic nationalism as religion. I use the geographic as distinct from the racial, for that also can have a mystical significance. But the Western observer must admit that Babu Shiva Prasad's brand of nationalism (let us call it geographic) is less narrow than a racial nationalism. The latter may divide the inhabitants of the same country and set them to cut each other's throats because of the colour and the blood of their respective ancestors, which no one can help or change. Babu Shiva Prasad's new religion of nationalism, looked at from a proper angle, is a mystical patriotism, a love of one's native land and its inhabitants, of whatever mind, colour, and race they may be.

To the Indian student of history its interest lies elsewhere. It is a recurrence of an old idea, a perpetual longing which runs throughout Indian history from the very beginning. Curious! On the surface India is, and always was, a minutely divided humanity; but below the surface there has always been an unbroken urge for unity. And this longing expressed itself by occasional symbolic attempts of a politico-religious nature in every period of her history. Akbar, India's greatest Muslem ruler, had his Hall of Worship in which men of all creeds were to worship the One God. Akbar gave God no external form. For, though a renegade in a sense, he was brought up as a

Muslem. And that means that he had to remain a monotheist and a believer in a God who cannot be expressed in symbols. God would remain Unseen for any Muslem, even if he forsook his religion. So all Indians were to worship the Unseen God, and the Unseen God was to be the link between men of all religions. Akbar did not succeed. Reasons are many and we will leave them out here. But the idea appeared again in modern times. A Muslem poet, Mohammad Iqbal, revived the religio-political creed in verse so as to create unity in India. We have already seen the germ of Babu Shiva Prasad's idea in M. Iqbal's poem, the *New Temple*.

So Babu Shiva Prasad's New Temple is the same as the one germinated in the poet's mind. But Babu, being a Hindu, had to externalize his Deity. Therefore here we are face to face with the idea of unity expressed in nationalism of a mystico-religio-political form. As I am writing these lines I have before me a copy of the *Harijan*, dated October 31, 1936. There is an article describing the inauguration of Babu Shiva Prasad's New Temple, and an account of the New God he is adding to the already crowded Hindu Pantheon.

For the writer, God can have nothing to do with passions, passing ideas, boundaries, or even symbols. All may be in Him, but He is not any of them. But I must confess that Babu Shiva Prasad's unquestionable sincerity, faith, and love affected me and affects me still, just as they did in Dr. Bhagavan Das's room. After all, side by side with hundreds of gods and places of worship in Benares, where in each of them a separate humanity worships, and allows not his countrymen of other faiths to enter and worship with him, there is now also one where all may kneel together. Yet how much freer of all passing ideas, be they nationalism or anything else, were the gatherings in the open before Mahatma Gandhi's

house where the pandit sang, and no shadow of a name or ideology projected itself between the soul of the worshipper and its Creator!

We dined in the house on the left. On the terrace we washed our hands, pouring water mutually, and serving each other. We entered a room where a low table was laid, and food set for each in separate copper trays. The diet was strictly vegetarian, all manner of vegetables cooked with tomato juice, and boiled unpolished rice. It tasted extremely good and was, I believe, just the right diet for that climate.

Granddaughters of Dr. Bhagavan Das, faithful to their old custom, did not sit at table with us, but served during the meal. Two dark slim girls with burning black eyes, graceful in body and intelligent in mind. I could see them even when they retired to their rooms, which opened into the dining-room. There were piles of books and papers on small tables, and they were leaning over them. For both of them were preparing for the University exams.

From my window next morning I saw the light of Benares, and again the impression I had of the Indian sky on the ocean repeated itself. That strange whiteness of the air, and the stranger, dull, washed-out blue of the dome above. . . . No wonder that that light breeds primeval fancies. I dressed and went on to the terrace. There was no one out yet, though we were to go on the river early. A little later Muejeeb appeared, and I believe that it is the only time I have observed such inner quietude and peace in his tortured eyes.

That day, which we began with such peace in our hearts, was so full of sensations so varied that I still wonder how we

managed to get so much into a mere twelve hours. Here are those which I consider the strongest impressions:

A visit to Babu Shiva Prasad. He and his family offered us tea and fruit. His humble abode was opposite his old palace. It was a one-storeyed simple house with the eternal terrace before it. The other buildings were among strange tropical trees, and between the leaves and branches one could stretch one's hand and touch the Ganges. The interior was simply furnished in the native style, but it also had several comfortable armchairs covered with immaculate white calico. He himself sat on one of them, barefooted and bareheaded; his hair was snowy white and his patriarchal beard was spread over his broad chest. And the kind black eyes of this generously and broadly built giant took hold of me just as my maternal grandfather's used to do in the bygone days. I never knew why I liked my grandfather's eyes in my childhood. Now I know; they were, like those of Babu Shiva Prasad, those of a strong, simple, and clean-hearted man, and of a child as well. All Babu did had an element of play—even his naive New Temple with India as its god. One thought of his whim like that of a generous little boy who invites other children to play with him in his father's house. Bless him and his Temple, Allah of all the worlds!

A visit to Benares Hindu University, both the women's and the men's parts. I noted its workshops where men were trained not merely as engineers, but as skilled workers, artisans, and mechanics. A talk to the students, a visit to the professors in the evening. Solemn-looking men in all sorts of costumes who asked me questions in the same solemn way. A visit to another school or seminar, the last being an equivalent of the Jamia where the teaching is done in Hindi. The talk with the boys was interesting, not so much because of what was said,

but because of the new mentality I noted in them. They had none of the peace and the friendliness of the Jamia, but they had all its definiteness. I was told that they were profoundly discontented, having been victims of the Non-co-operation Movement.

A visit to a kindergarten of Montessori type. Beautiful building and beautifully run, it has been one of the educational institutions connected with Theosophy; that is, with Annie Besant. As I went through it, I was amazed to see different teachers teaching different alphabets in different scripts. How this infinite division of India penetrates even an infant school!

Seeing Benares:

Two steep narrow streets going down to the Ganges stand out in my mind's eye. One is the Bazaars, stalls in a row on both sides, all of hand-made ware and Benares art. The copper industry interested me, and I noted the extraordinary number of useful or simply decorative articles that were made. There were also textiles; also shops for food, specially greengrocers. There were as many cows as men, who went the round of the market; but one saw at once that the cows were the higher-class passers-by and royally privileged. They stopped before any greengrocer, and munched whatever vegetable took their fancy. No one dare shoo them; on the contrary, people stood aside respectfully and let them pass. I admit I have never been more heroic than I was on that day; for I would prefer the wildest tiger to the mildest cow. With no reason at all the fear they arouse in my heart verges on panic. There were also temples here and there between the stalls. On the steps of one of them a man sat and chanted the Vedas.

The largest Temple of Benares:

It is dedicated to Vishnu. The inside is intricate. There are marble stands, strange divisions effected by columns with

gilded capitals, and strange shaped ceilings and roofs. There is also a gilded lattice before the divinity. And divinities are everywhere practically drowned in flowers. Hundreds of men and women circulate, throwing flowers or talking. Some of the faces have an exaltation of what seems to be a neurotic, emotional paroxysm. It is difficult to understand their feelings from their gestures and faces. There is a mighty hum, like that of a beehive; or like that of a Turkish bath when overfull. The same atmosphere of steam due to the breath of the worshippers; and after a time they appear like a dream-crowd in a mist, indistinguishable and in perpetual motion.

A narrower and steeper by-street:

It goes down in steps. So narrow that one could stretch out one's arms and touch the buildings on both sides simultaneously. The buildings are all tiny temples, dedicated mostly to animal gods. Nearly the entire jungle is deified. The deities are garlanded, their abodes filled with flowers. The buildings are like fanciful toys, more like the Far East than anything I have yet seen. They are all magenta-red, violet, or in rich brown tones. The elephant god is the friendliest, and by far the jolliest. He sits on his haunches, his trunk to one side, his head muffled in a garland. The eyes are shrewd, and seem amused. For me these tiny temples and their animal gods are more likeable than the big Temple. They give one a sense of individuality, a sense of struggle in each individual or group. Each has imagined something different in the way of a god to help him in his troubles—and human troubles are so endless and so varied. There is an atmosphere of wild symbolism, as well as primeval imagination. Man, as in the days of his earliest arrival on earth, is trying to worship the familiar things. And what could be more familiar than the jungle in India? Again "In-the-beginning-of-time . . ." atmosphere prevails.

The state of mind of the worshippers in those likeable little temples is still wrapped up in a living, seething and none-too-clear symbolism. One feels that they have not reached the *abstract* state yet.

Once a Persian poet said to me in America: "It is the monotheism of Muslims which restricts imagination, makes a narrow world, and kills all art." Well, has it? Though I could sit and muse, even talk to these simple symbols, I am still the unrepentant monotheist. My God defies all form. He evolves and evolves and refuses to be fixed in any humanly-conceived shape. Aren't all the poignant strivings of the human heart behind this plurality a desire to reach the same Source and the same Spirit, the Creator and the Lord of the Universe?

We go down to an open slope. A tiny calf, a lovely brown one, is standing with a white garland round its baby neck. The soft brown eyes look wonderingly at the crowd around it. He is too replete to deign to touch the fresh grass his worshippers offer him. A man stands by and, agitating his arms, describes the manifold virtues and the specific power of this lovely and lovable little calf-deity.

All along the Ganges are little groups. They also seem in perpetual movement, washing themselves, their utensils or household articles in the sacred water. There are piles and piles of wood, funeral pyres, and corpses swathed in white laid by the pyres or on them. Some of the dead seem so slim and pitifully young, and others so heavy and old. Relatives round them move feverishly; very soon their near ones will be turned into ashes, and scattered on the Ganges. Along the shore rafts and rafts, each connected with the shore by a board. They are occupied by single persons or by entire families, according to their size—all washing, washing . . .



dip in and dip out. The drainage of the city, a dark, viscous, nasty-looking liquid, flows into the river between the rafts. I wonder why there is no cholera or typhoid or some such epidemic. But I am told that, according to scientists who have analysed the waters of the Ganges, there is a germ-killing and disinfecting element in its waters.

Now we are on the river. Ours is a moving raft with a mattress covered in white and cushions to sit upon. A half-naked man paddles, and we drift along slowly watching the shore on our right; for the left side is empty, nothing but lonely lands, some trees and beaches. The inhabited side looks like a pile of silkworms in slow agitation, a wriggling mass, weaving who knows what fantastic dreams. There are temples of red, brown, yellowish or white on the steep slope which rises up suddenly. They are connected to the river by steep flights of hundreds of steps. On these steps ascend and descend draped forms of all colours, but mostly white. There are also palaces, parapets. . . .

"Is it not like Venice?"

Not much. Venice is compact, definitely outlined in spite of its intricacies of design. It is Mediaeval Occident, and the people on its shores are very much taken up by terrestrial passions. They sing of love, and commit all sorts of iniquitous acts for love—or for something else. This Benares is wide, indistinct in outline; and its buildings, its light, and its seething crowds seem to belong to a prehistoric age when humanity had not got over the wonder and the fear of finding themselves on earth. . . . "In the beginning of time . . ."

We returned up the same slope and the same steep street, and once more beheld the human turmoil in the Temple. Should one say with Kabir: "There is nothing but water at the bathing places; and I know that they are useless, for I

have bathed in them. The images are lifeless, they cannot speak; I know, for I have cried aloud to them."

No, I did not feel that way at all. By some curious association of ideas, the Benares scene made me think of a play I had read in my early youth, and which had given me strong food for thought. It was called *Faith*, and took place in Ancient Egypt. The hero, a man endowed with an uncompromising love of Truth, had constituted himself the champion of Truth and destroyer of sham, in all its manifestations. And the greatest sham to him had appeared to be Religion, such as was taught by the Egyptian priests to the masses. So he set out to unmask the priestly tricks which he believed to be a result of the greed and love of power of the priests who wished to exploit the ignorance and the credulity of the people.

On the other hand, the High Priest tried to make him understand that the priests did not keep the illusions and the belief in the sham gods only for love of power, or for self-interest. The High Priest wanted to prove that the *people's will to cling to illusions for comfort and strength in life had something to do with the preservation of idolatry*. So the High Priest took the hero to the Temple and put him behind the Goddess. Once a year the Goddess shook her head, a miracle which confirmed her divine power. Naturally this was manipulated by the priest, who pulled a string. Now the hero could see and hear the people praying. He is asked by the High Priest to pull the string, which will make the Great Illusion continue; or not to pull it, in which case the miracle will not take place and Faith will die.

And the people came to the Temple—a helpless and pitiful humanity, blind, crippled, broken-hearted, and miserable. The cry of distress filled the Temple, and the hero behind

## INSIDE INDIA

the Goddess saw the agony written in the sightless orbs, heard their supplications for a sign which would make them support the burden of life. And the poignant spectacle of individual and collective human suffering was so strong that the hero pulled the string, and the Goddess shook her head. . . .

Supposing I were the hero in the Benares scene, and the faith in this primeval but beautiful spectacle depended on my pulling a string, what would I do? I cannot answer that question. But I had a sudden longing to speak with the High Priests of this colourful and spectacular religious show. I longed to ask them:

"I know that in your religion God is One and Invisible—Is it, or is it not, true that Truth, which can have no external symbols, is more beautiful than all the beauty in the Universe? If you tell your people this supreme reality of Religion—of yours and of everyone's religion—would it make them lose their Faith?"

On the top of the hill where we were to take our car we met Abdul Majid, the Muslem notable, a business man and a kind of leader of the scanty and poor Muslem community. He asked us to tea at his house, and we accepted.

He is an Arab by origin and has mixed a great deal in politics. He has given that up now. One could see that he had the high intelligence, as well as the eloquence of his race. Besides, he was a man of the world; he had travelled a great deal, and seemed to be a cultured person.

His home was built in a courtyard with high walls covered with thick ivy, which gave it a sombre appearance.

We drank tea in silence, being rather exhausted by our long wanderings. He said, "The Muslem community is in the court, will you speak to them?"

Here is a man with no mean ability to arrange and organize, I thought. It needed an expert in those things to reckon the exact time we would pass from the market-place, send messages to the Muslem community, and make them assemble when we were having tea in the house; for there had not been a single soul in the courtyard when we entered. We came out to the porch, which was crowded as well as the courtyard.

There were perhaps a hundred or more souls, mostly humble artisans and traders. Modest, diffident and shy, just as all poor people are, yet they had an unconscious dignity which all men, who live by some art or craft, and who do not depend on bosses, seem to possess. They were all poorly clad, some in hand-woven white cotton cloth made into long and loose chemises. They all had a lonely and indescribably sad expression.

I spoke to them for twenty minutes, and Abdul Majid interpreted, for very few of them understood, though they listened with an attention which made one suppose that they did. There was an intenseness, solemnity, and gravity about them which they communicated to the atmosphere and to us all.

This was the first crowd I had met in Benares which had none of the general emotion, festivity, and joyous holiday air; and because of that the loneliness and the sadness about them was touching. Yet they all showed the compactness and definiteness of outline in an intangible way which seems common to Muslems in India. Like Kabir, I thought they must have found the waters of the Ganges useless, and the stone images gave them no response or consolation. Theirs

was the God of Idea and Spirit which cannot be expressed in stone images, the God of an immutable Law of Evolution which leads all beings to Perfection in His own good time. Whether they could have expressed it or not, the idea was part and parcel of their creed. The essence of it was in their eyes and in their being. This gathering had none of the familiar and personal comfort and jollity of the Benares religious fair. I felt an immense respect for them. Of all the Muslems I have met in India and elsewhere, the best and saintliest could not have impressed me as these did. I could very well imagine them praying in the open before Mahatma Gandhi's house, under God's own candles, and in God's own world as a Temple, with no symbol made by man, but with the will to reach the Spirit in their own hearts. But they would have no priest to tell them to pray to this or to that god, no intermediary was needed. Man is man's equal, therefore he is free and will bow to no priest-created image. True, that to have no god man-created out of familiar and human images set them apart, and made them lonely. Yet they stuck to it, refusing to find consolation in anything but Truth, however sad and comfortless it may be. And they stuck to the idea of the One and the Invisible Spirit for a thousand years amid those joyous temples, gay and humanized gods. Though it was I and not they who preached, still, that mute crowd gave me the message of Truth which must guide us all in life no matter what we call it.

One man stood out in front of that motley crowd. He wore a white cotton chemise and a skull-cap. He had a wide face, with prominent cheek-bones and black eyes wide apart staring into the air. There was strange fire in them and a determination, almost pugnaciousness in his short nose and his shortly-cut round black beard. From the way he held his

elbows apart, I guessed that he manipulated a loom; therefore he must be a weaver. So must Kabir have looked, that fifteenth-century poet and teacher of the same truth of the Oneness of God:

O, Servant, where dost thou seek Me? Lo, I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque. . . .

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and Renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me . . .

. . . God is the breath of all breath!

After the Hindu and the Muslem, it was Buddhist Benares which we went to visit; or rather, the remains of the Buddhist Benares which is no more. It was the site of the excavation at Sarnath of a monastery which had existed two thousand-odd years ago. On one side is a New Buddhist monastery, where we saw the monks walking in twos and threes in their orange-coloured draperies. On the other side is a still newer Buddhist temple, built by the Japanese. Its walls were being painted by Japanese artists, and looked like the walls of a modern café in Montparnasse. Between the two stood the old ruins. But one got a sense of the Buddhist period in the tiny museum a little further. There was the usual huge Buddha, the usual broad face of power and thought, face of pity and love. Poor bewildered me, who am nothing but a passing flicker in this most bewildering world, will always claim a great understanding and nearness to this great teacher and lover of humanity. But it was not the huge Buddha which expressed the loftiest altitude to which Buddhist art reached in India. It was rather the small figures. The smile of pity carved on their lips thousands of years ago turned,

in comparison, the smile on Giaconda's lips or on Rodin's faces into lurid and clumsy grimaces.

It is no doubt this perfection in understanding, in beauty of thought, which made the Buddhist period in India the finest and most humane. "How," I asked myself, "could Hinduism drive out Buddhism in India? And how is it that this same Hinduism, with its magic ability of assimilating or driving out anything which is not Hindu, has neither assimilated nor driven out Islam?" The Muslem regime, in its art, maybe in its philosophy too, never reached the heights of the Buddhist Asoka period. The answer to my question was in the faces of the poor crowd in Abdul Majid's courtyard. Because Buddhism also spent itself in symbols, ideas got lost in stone images and idols, and precepts degenerated into conventions with little or no idea behind them. For idea is the only everlasting force, and we have to preserve it at every cost, if we want to keep in touch with the Divine. It was the lesson which the poor artisans in Abdul Majid's house taught me, and it is also in the Bible: "In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was God."

## CHAPTER XV

### Calcutta

THIS former capital of India is a typical European city. It was built by the English. Though there is nothing to get excited about in its architecture, neither is there that unhappy and gaudy mixture of East and West so often met with. Yet its business-minded matter-of-factness is only on the surface. Calcutta is the centre of Bengal, and the Bengal temperament is the pepper and salt to Indian thought and action, but to be able to understand what Calcutta stands for in India, one must first know a little of the Hindu-Muslem-English culture at work.

Some Indian friends said to me: "Whatever has happened in Calcutta belongs to the past, even if it is a recent past. For what is actually happening at present you must look at Delhi and the frontiers."

That may be true, but whatever is happening in New India has been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the modern movements which have taken place in Calcutta. They mostly belong to the nineteenth century, when the swing of the pendulum was in a new direction throughout the East. Therefore in India, as elsewhere, one must have a rudimentary knowledge of nineteenth-century movements.

In India they began with Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj (1772-1833). Brahma is the adjective from Brahman, the god of the Upanishads and the Vedanta philosophy; Samaya is a noun meaning Society. So let us call the movement an attempt to build a Society of God. For India cannot, or would not, conceive man without God, therefore



every New Society must first define its deity. The conception of Brahma Samaj is the same as the Muslem conception—God is One.

Ram Mohan Roy was a Brahman connected with the Muslem Government of Bengal, and was doubtless influenced by Muslem thought. He was above all a student of the writings of the Sufi School of Muslem mystics. Not only in thought, but in taste and temperament, he appears to be more like a Muslem than a Hindu. His favourite quotations were mostly from the Sufis. Yet, though so much in love with Muslem mysticism, the new creed he evolved seems, to me at least, to have been more akin to rational and orthodox Islam.

At fifteen Ram Mohan Roy took to the road, for he was dissatisfied with his surroundings. Then he settled at Benares, and made a profound study of Sanscrit, and the Hindu scriptures. This was followed by an equally serious and profound study of English, and of Christianity. A servant of the East-Indian Company, a protégé of a remarkable and sympathetic Englishman, John Digby, he acquired enough to retire and settle in Calcutta, which he did in 1814.

Brahma-Samaj was founded a year later, and it went through several phases, as all movements do. Its character in Ram Mohan Roy's lifetime is well expressed by the name he gave it—"The Friendly Association." He stood central, representing Hinduism, while one arm was stretched out to Christianity and the other to Islam; thus he united the three.

The Muslem side of this living triangle was the definition of God: His Oneness. God could not be represented by any image, be it of stone, or of man. Ram Mohan Roy's conception of Christianity was also like that of a Muslem. Christ was a great prophet, one who considered himself a messenger of God, but he was *not God Himself*; and he had been mis-

interpreted and misunderstood by his disciples. This strict monotheism of Ram Mohan Roy was responsible for the establishment of an active Unitarian Christian Church in India. But Ram Mohan Roy also derived a great deal from the ethics of Christianity.

After defining the God of his New Society, he went further and tried to do away with some of the evil social practices of his time. He attacked widow-burning, and it was owing to the agitation of Brahma-Samaj that the famous order of December 4, 1828, was passed, and widow-burning became a criminal offence. Next he attacked the Caste problem. But this did not get beyond the theoretical stage for he himself did not give up his caste. To establish the equality of the sexes was another social reform he wanted to carry out. But that also achieved only meagre results. However, his campaign against polygamy was effective. There is very little polygamy among Hindus nowadays. His desire to give women the right to inherit was not realized in his time, nor is it entirely realized yet. But the educational part of his reforms created the University of Calcutta, which has had far-reaching influences. For with that University, which was the first definite medium of upper-class English culture, *the West acquired a lasting foothold in India.*

Ram Mohan Roy died in 1833 after having done as much as could be expected of any pioneer. His death closed the first and the uncompromisingly rational phase of Brahma-Samaj.

The second phase opened when Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore took the lead.

Rationalism and Liberalism are not digestible in large doses for any length of time by any considerable number of human beings. To attempt it is like putting humanity on a scientific

but tasteless synthetic diet. Man will ever hanker after the imponderable, after the unseen. Ram Mohan Roy had established Theism for his followers, but he had not given them any form of prayer. He himself did not believe in prayer, that is, not in any form which was more than meditation. So there had been no collective prayers in Brahma-Samaj during his lifetime. That meant there was something lacking in the emotional life of the Association.

Debendra Nath Tagore<sup>1</sup> began to minister to the emotional hunger of Brahma-Samajists. He drew up a covenant which contained a list of vows, and he also inaugurated a form of prayer. The Association met weekly and prayed together. The vows were very much in keeping with the original belief of Ram Mohan Roy. The principal ones were: (1) To worship God by loving Him and doing such deeds as He loves. (2) To abstain from all idolatry. But the new name Debendra Nath Tagore gave the Association indicated the slight swing away from the earlier phase. He called it "The Association of the Seekers after Truth." Under cover of this austere name it was also becoming nationalistic. This period was frankly against Christian penetration. Though the Association retained the ethical elements derived from Christianity, it was opposed to Christianizing Indians, for Christians were the foreign rulers.

This progressive movement, now tinged with religious ritual and the beginnings of Nationalism, changed further when Keshab Chandra Sen became a member, and soon after its leader. The name also changed to "Believers' Association," which truly indicated a further swing away from rationalism towards a more mystical and emotional phase.

Keshab Chandra Sen established a series of rites and cere-

<sup>1</sup> Son of Prince Dwarka Nath (Hastings, *Enc. of Religion and Ethics*).

monies but still kept the Association non-idolatrous. So faith married to idea brought about greater action. Some of the aims which had previously been platonic discussions now became realities. Caste was given up by all Brahma-Samajists. An active missionary organization propagated the Brahma-Samaj ideas over wide areas; and Bombay and Madras established Associations of their own. But all these activities and reforms proved too much for the older members. The Association split into two. The older members were not willing to change Hindu Society to the extent which Keshab intended. Therefore Keshab and his followers formed a separate branch, and carried on their reforms.

Keshab Chandra Sen is undoubtedly the most picturesque of the three remarkable leaders of Brahma-Samaj. He understood the mentality of the masses better than his predecessors, and knew fully the effect of spectacle and its emotional appeal to the mass-mind. Among the texts he gathered for use in services there were Buddhist, Christian, Muslem, and Hindu scriptures; and he it was who added music and singing, flying flags and beating drums. He instituted a new liturgy and the society held annual festivals at Calcutta which gave the whole movement a popular and lively appeal. As one reads of these spectacular processions one cannot help musing over the sameness of historical phenomena. Names and forms change, but the spectacle and the use leaders of men make of it are always the same. . . . "Bread and circuses . . . bread and circuses. . . ."

On the social side Keshab Chandra Sen in his early period was audacious. He managed to get child-marriage and polygamy entirely abolished in Brahma-Samaj, which measures were recognized and legalized by the Indian Government. This naturally turned Brahma-Samaj into a totally different

kind of community from that of the Hindu. Keshab's visit to England made him accelerate his social reforms still more. Schools were opened for girls as well as for boys and the Bharat Ashram, a home in which families could gather together for the cultivation of a better home-life and the education of children, was established. Women began to accompany their husbands to public meetings. With an eye to mass-mentality and how to use it, Keshab also popularized the Press, and increased the number of missionaries. But appetite for change had become so keen that the young began to find even Keshab not radical enough.

Then the man who had brought about such admirable changes made the mistake of all great egotists, who sooner or later acquire a divinity complex. Instead of investing his teachings in an organization carried by a minority, which in turn should be elected and controlled by the majority, he invested everything in his own person. Personality vitalizes a movement and makes change easier to bring about, but it also condemns a movement to decline the moment a strong and picturesque leader is not there to carry the rank and file with him. Keshab controlled everything; his word was law. Being too far advanced to call himself a god, he did the next best thing to preserve his personal authority. He announced that he received divine revelation from above. With this heavenly sanction at his beck and call (in which he may have sincerely believed) he became all-powerful. A number of young disciples began to fall at his feet and worship him; and with this the movement took on a more and more religious aspect at the expense of social reform.

Keshab Chandra Sen bought an estate near Calcutta and called it the "Forest Abode." He lived there in rigorous asceticism. His followers were to drink only from earthen-

ware cups, cook their own food, clean and repair, and make pavements. Influenced more and more by the old ascetics, he began to advocate retirement from the world. Individualism was gaining the ascendancy over the idea of social service. The disciples he trained at the Forest Abode were divided into four categories:

(i) Yogi, adept in rapturous communion; (ii) Bakta, adept in rapturous love of God; (iii) Gnani, the seeker after knowledge; (iv) Shebak, the active servant of humanity.

The swing to the purely ancient forms and beliefs of the mystical East was definite in this period. If this alienated those who were still attached to the social purposes of Brahma-Samaj, it also increased Keshab's hold over the rank and file, especially over the missionaries. And at this period he inaugurated what is called the "New Dispension." It was a religion, of an eclectic order. He himself was accepted as divinely appointed, that is as the prophet of this religion. It was to be a universal religion and had for its mission the uniting of all religions.

In 1881 he appeared on a platform with his missionaries around him. He held a red banner with "Naba Bidhan" inscribed on it, which means "The New Dispension." There were symbols—the Hindu trident, the Christian cross, and the Muslem crescent. On a table before him were the scriptures of the four great world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.

While the New Dispension was decidedly monotheistic and had no idolatrous practices, he himself, on the other hand, fell into the old polytheism of Hinduism, describing polytheism as a variant of Theism.

It is necessary at this point to pause and consider a curious fact about India, which we have already noted on several

instances. No matter how small a cross-section of Indian history one may undertake to study, one is nearly conscious of a regular beat, a particular rhythm. Just as the soldiers' march is controlled by "Left, Right, Left, Right," so the rhythm of the march of Indian history is controlled by "Unite, Divide, Unite, Divide. . . ." The Brahma-Samaj movement from 1824 to 1884 was a long swing towards "Unite." In the last phase, with Keshab as leader, that swing seemed to have gone as far as it could. With his falling back into polytheism, the "divide" swing was already in motion. And the "divide" swing was obvious and at its full with Arya-Samaj, another association and movement which started during the last years of Keshab's life. Arya-Samaj took a good deal of its impetus from Keshab, and to some extent from Brahma-Samaj itself.

The founder of Arya-Samaj was as picturesque and as important as Keshab Chandra Sen. He was the son of a Brahman, Amba Sankara, and his original name was Mula Sankara. But as the founder of Arya-Samaj he is known under the name of Dayananda Sarasvati. His family were worshippers of Siva, and as a boy he was brought up in the rigid Hindu tradition. But already at fourteen he showed that he had a mind of his own, and was no slave to tradition. At a fast, when he took part in the night vigil in the temple, the sight of the mice running up and down the god, eating the food put there for its consumption made him say: "I feel it impossible to reconcile the idea of an omnipotent living god with an idol which allows the mice to run up and down its body. . . ."

In 1848, when he was twenty-one years of age, his parents insisted on his marrying, which led him to leave his home and go away. And it was after this that he changed his name

to Dayananda Sarasvati, and became a monk. Eight years he wandered, studying under quite a number of saintly and learned ascetics. And after that period he began to preach against idolatry. Of all the Hindu reformers, Dayananda Sarasvati, in these early years of his mission, appeals most to the Muslem. His monotheism was uncompromising, rigid, and extreme. Though he derived this belief in the Oneness of God from the Vedas, so far no other Hindu preacher had preached it with such ardour and directness. Though all the High Priests of Hinduism had believed in one God, none so far had been willing to impart this knowledge to the masses with such force. That is, after all, easy to understand if one knows something about the history of religion. All organized Churches of ancient times had this common policy of keeping the ultimate Truth from the masses. The Truth was in the keeping of the priests, but the masses must be taught to worship symbols, idols which they were abler to understand than abstractions. It is only Protestantism in Christianity and Islam which have at all times insisted on imparting to the masses whatever truth there was in their respective scriptures. For the Muslem, what the most learned can know the man in the street can also know about the nature of God.

Arya-Samaj as a definite creed and organization was established after Dayananda Sarasvati had visited Calcutta and fallen under the influence of Keshab Chandra Sen. It was after this that he gave a definite form to his preaching. It was to be no longer only a desire to save the soul of the individual by inviting him to believe in the One God; it was a creed on which a new Hindu Society was to be established. Although both Brahma-Samaj and Arya-Samaj aimed at creating a new Hindu Society, the nature and the form of the Society each had in mind differed.



Brahma-Samaj was out to unite all Indians, no matter of what creed; Arya-Samaj was out to separate them. Brahma-Samaj was a social, religious reform movement, and the bias towards politics in the form of Nationalism was weak. Arya-Samaj was as strongly political as it was religious or social. And its politics were a narrow type of Nationalism. It meant to extirpate both Christianity and Islam as disruptive forces in India. Christianity, though the religion of a minority, could not be extirpated because it also was the religion of the ruling power. Islam could not be extirpated, because it was the religion of seventy millions, and Muslems are mostly of the same race as the Hindus. Further, it had a culture of its own which it had given to India; and though Muslems are only one-fifth of the whole population, they are compact on the frontiers and are the most warlike, while there is no caste among them to prevent them from uniting. Therefore, Dayananda's Nationalism ceased to be even nationalism in any broad sense and became distinctly a narrow community movement. Withal it was all the time and openly directed against the Muslems. For example, the Protection of Cows Society might have been useful in agricultural areas; but when it was directed against beef-eaters it became a disruptive force.

But looking at the reforms Arya-Samaj has achieved within its own community, they seem admirable. It did away with caste between its members; it accepted the equality of the sexes. But when all is said, it became another caste itself, as separate and as distinct from the existing castes as any of them. It also made the breach between the Muslem and Hindu deeper, and riots became bloodier. For Arya-Samaj believes in killing the bad; and the Muslem was among what he considered bad.

When the leader died, Arya-Samaj split into factions. The swing in the direction of "Divide" had gone as far as it could, and now began the swing back in the "Unite" direction. This happened in the post-war years. There were many causes for it, but the dominant feature was a nationalist fervour, a universal urge for Independence. It had at its head Mahatma Gandhi on the Hindu side, and Dr. Ansari, as well as other prominent figures, on the Muslem. But the discussion of that period does not belong here.

Will this backwards and forwards swing be for ever the normal pulse of Indian life? Will it make India preserve its diversity, yet enable it to be a united nation?

In Calcutta I was Abdur Rahman Siddiqi's guest. He had been among the young lieutenants of Dr. Ansari in the Indian Red Crescent Mission to Turkey during the Balkan war. He had also been among the prominent figures of the Khilafat and Nationalist movements during the post-war years; and, like the other prominent figures, he had been in prison. By this time he had retired from politics, and gone into the jute business. A middle-aged bachelor, he lived with his nephew and his nephew's wife—a charming Parsee girl who looked as if she had just stepped out of an ancient Persian print. There was also a tiny but most vivacious baby, Wardha. She was named after the place where Mahatma Gandhi lives. Abdur Rahman Siddiqi's home to some extent represents a façade of Indian life. One meets there Muslems, Hindus, and Parsees typical of Modern India.

The University impressed me. The double impact of tradition and progress was in its very atmosphere. Though it is dominantly Hindu, it also has a considerable number of Muslem students. The Muslem students invited me to their hostel, and gave me a most pleasant hour. Besides the speeches, which are part of the routine, there were Bengali songs sung by students, which were really charming. In Calcutta I had a feeling that the Hindu-Muslem relation is like that of an old married couple; their quarrels are daily occurrences, but I don't think they could live without each other in spite of the quarrels—perhaps they couldn't live without the quarrels either.

At the request of the student body I gave my extension lectures at the University in the quadrangle, speaking from the balcony. It is the only place which can hold over seven thousand students, and they were all present.

My first contact with Bengali youth is an unforgettable memory. To stand on the balcony and look down at the crowd gave me a feeling of looking upon some strange picture. The Bengali is darker than the U.P. man, and this fact was enhanced by the white draperies which they all wore. The features were indistinct, but thousands and thousands of black bright eyes glistened; to me they looked like a huge white cloud studded with innumerable stars.

"Bande Mataram!" shouted the Hindus, whenever anything in the speech pleased them. "Allah, Akbar!" shouted the Muslems, whenever they approved of any point I had made. The former means "Live Mother," and is the national yell of the Hindus. The latter is the famous cry of all Muslems.

Sir J. C. Bose showed me his laboratory, and demonstrated his well-known scientific theory. He is a great botanist, and says that the reaction of a single leaf when exposed to an

electric current becomes the reaction of all the leaves on the same tree. I remember the demonstration on a large tree in his lovely garden. His assistant touched a single leaf, and behold the entire tree trembled in unison! "God, if the leaves of a mere tree are so interdependent that what one suffers or enjoys affects them all, how much more must your children on earth be affected by the pain or joy of a single fellow-creature?" I asked myself.

Lady Bose presided over a meeting of all the women's clubs, which I addressed in Calcutta. It was followed by a visit to a Purdah school for Muslem girls. An able and enterprising Muslem woman was at the head of it. She reminded me a little of Begam Mohammad Ali. She herself mixes with men but keeps her veil on, and believes that Muslem women should be educated without being emancipated. The institution answers a definite need, for there are families among Muslems at Calcutta who do not care to have their daughters educated in the mixed colleges.

Abdur Rahman took us to hear the famous Calcutta singer, Nuri-Jihan, which means "The Light of the World." She is certainly a light in the Calcutta firmament, and is classed among the foremost artists in India. Every visitor to Calcutta tries to hear her, as naturally as he would try to visit the Kali Temple.

Nuri-Jihan lives in an obviously musical quarter. Every house in the dark street was audible as we passed. Her own house is large, and her salon was already full when we arrived. It consisted of two parts, separated from each other by columns. We sat in the part where she was herself. Our group was near the window on one side, and opposite us was the place

where the singer sat. Besides the men and women already settled to hear her, others arrived constantly. Some of the men wore dinner jackets and some their native draperies; while women were all in their native costumes. A number of servants went round offering the guests lemonade—and something else which did not look like lemonade. That this was infinitely stronger than lemonade was evident from the way it caused those who drank it to become flushed and excited. I had the sensation that our sober and drab group by the window weighed heavily on those who might have preferred to express themselves more freely.

The furniture was European, but the "Light of the World" was not. She preferred to sit on cushions placed for her on the floor. She wore a flimsy yellow robe embroidered with gold threads. The effect as its folds lay on each other was like that of a mimosa heap, with the moonlight shining on it. Her arms were bare, and her hands were both lovely and expressive. Gold bangles tinkled on her arms as she moved them—and she had an almost poignant way of waving them, in the manner of a fair slave who examines her chains.

Whatever her age, the face did not look more than twenty-five. It was perfectly moulded, slightly oval with a pretty, small, decorative chin, and extremely delicate profile. The skin from the distance appeared pale, and with the reflection of the yellow and gold its pallor was like that of some delicate petal bathed in noonday sun. Two young, black eyes burnt with passion, and a diamond stuck into a hole in one of her nostrils scintillated. Though the habit of boring a hole in a nostril and putting a diamond into it may not be more barbarous than boring holes in one's ears and wearing earrings, the effect was disturbing. For she had earrings as well, hung on gold chains and swaying against her long, firm

throat. And her neck moved to and fro, to and fro, with the lilt of her song.

On either side of her on the pile of cushions sat two musicians, one with a small drum which he beat with two slender sticks, the other playing on a stringed instrument with a bow. They were both old, bearded and turbaned, wearing long coats, buttoned tightly in the front. And they had extremely grave and dignified faces—they seemed to be fully conscious of the value of their art, but utterly indifferent to the audience.

"The Light of the World" conducted her two-man orchestra all the time while she sang. She did it by spreading out her hands one way or the other way, making strange gestures; and in accordance with the command of these hands the music became joyful, mournful, slow or fast. And the manner in which those white, slender fingers opened and closed made one think of the petals of some tropical flower opening and closing according to the heat and light of their environment.

The bearded and turbaned heads also swayed right and left, right and left, as with the rhythm which her hands commanded. The venerable old heads moved so regularly that one might have very well thought of them as robots manipulated by strings from behind. If the air they played lasted an hour, the heads moved with the same regularity for an hour, showing no fatigue whatsoever.

Her voice was high soprano, which I don't very much care for, but it was not the voice so much as the passionate quality of it and her capacity of communicating that passion to her audience which mattered. That and her mastery of the technique of Indian music were enough to hold anyone present in that assembly, even if the hearer knew nothing about Indian music.

She gave us three types of Indian music.

(1) Indian classics. They are mainly Hindu, and there are no words to the long pieces. They are sung with such sounds as sounded to me "Bleblebleble . . . Sneshnesne . . ." that are always two consonants and one vowel. They are composed of half and quarter tones piled on top of each other, and worked into the most puzzling and strange designs. Some of the notes are so high that the singer's neck muscles stand out like those of the Laocoon group, and her face contracts and the mouth distorts like that of a gargoyle, while the body labours like that of a woman in the last moments of travail, so difficult it seems to give birth to them. There were bits of this music which made me think of some old Rossini opera sung in Vienna. There were bits which were utterly incomprehensible. The last bits made me think of "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." They also made one imagine the god of music in his earliest attempt to create melody and harmony, struggling with the vast material of sound, sometimes producing airs which may belong to the end of time, sometimes producing music belonging to the beginning.

Indians can listen to such music for hours on end, rapt and lost. The voice of the singer is of secondary importance. I have heard singing by old and feeble voices, but the interest of the audience was still intense; for what mattered was the technique and its inexplicable uniqueness. But by the end of an hour I was always exhausted. To me it was a cross-sound puzzle.

(2) Indian folk-songs. They are exquisite everywhere, especially in Bengal. The one by Tagore held me spellbound. I did not understand the words, and did not pay much attention when Abdur Rahman whispered their meaning, for I was entirely absorbed by the air itself, and the way Nuri-

Jihan sang it. I could see that it had something to do with bracelets, for she stretched out her fragile wrists, looked at them wonderingly, and shook her bangles lightly. I dare say the songs were mostly love songs, and she could put into them all the pathos and dumb intensity which a woman behind the *Purdah* is supposed to feel. Passion was not expressed by verbosity and the fussy brilliance of Italian music. All the same she thrilled her audience with the minor notes and the quarter tones which she sang with a queer sad resignation. I remember her eyes, wide open, and her lips trembling, she being altogether lost in the magic of her own song. I suppose that anything which that woman does not know in the gamut of terrestrial passion is not worth knowing.

These folk-songs are Hindu, but they have been evidently influenced a little by Muslem airs brought from Central Asia; for some of them were reminiscent of Eastern Anatolian airs and the Caucasian melodies.

(3) Muslem classics. They are known as *Kavalli*, and are mostly from *Mesnevi* (the mystical sacred collection of poems by Maulana Jalaled-din-i-Rumi). They are in Persian.

Here the writer was on familiar ground. For Maulana Jalaled-din-i-Rumi was a son of her country; and besides his international fame and influence, he was the supreme influence in Turkish music, and sacred and mystic literature and art. But the effect of a great artist or thinker differs according to the milieu his work penetrates. Maulana Jalaled-din-i-Rumi's influence on religious poetry, music, and dancing in Turkey has a classic serenity and intellectual element; while in India his poetry throbs with intense passion, almost sensuous.

"*Shamsi-Tabriz . . .*" she began. The Indian musician always starts it on a high note, and the opening bar has the



same burning ecstasy as the last. It gives one a sudden palpitation.

Neither body nor soul am I, but the soul of the Beloved.

Oh Sun of Tabriz, so enraptured am I in this world, that I know nothing, feel nothing but that rapture. . . .

When we left there was almost a competition between radios, instruments, and human voices in the houses of Nuri-Jihan's street.

Black tiger of Bengal in the Zoo, or the Temple of Kali? That was the question. For in my programme I had only two hours at Calcutta which I could dispose of according to my fancy. As I thought that black tigers might be found in other Zoos, while there was no Temple of Kali elsewhere, I decided in favour of the latter. Besides to neglect Kali would mean missing a certain aspect of Indian psychology. The goddess has three heads, but she dominates many human moods and accounts for many instincts. She is the spirit of destruction, but that means also the spirit which cleanses the accumulated dead matter of the past, and makes place for new creation. Hence she is also the spirit of creation. She also satisfies that longing of the human heart which sees the Cosmos in the lap of a mother-god. Just as the female is the deadlier of the human species, so this goddess is the deadliest of the god-race. Though a mother-god, she is far from being a kindly spirit; for she demands blood and sacrifice, even human sacrifice. The anarchist who kills, and terrorists who work out their political ideals through violence, find their sanction in Kali. The professional murderer and thief, the "Thug," and the politico-religious bandit, also consider Kali

their patroness. These supply her with human sacrifice, while the ordinary worshipper contributes a tiny black kid to her blood diet.

Those who think that the Hindu feels nothing but peace and love, and that he is incapable of killing or being killed, are wrong. Only, as he demands a religious sanction for everything, even for wickedness and law-breaking, Kali supplies it. When the Hindus kill the beef-eaters, they avenge those gods who do not want animals killed; but they also satisfy Kali who wants human sacrifice. But let not the man of any other religion turn up his nose at the Hindu worshipper of Kali. For the adherents of every religion—alas—have an unnamed Kali in their hearts. Destruction is as much an instinct as love in the human heart. The question is whether the divine commandment of every religion which says “Thou shalt not kill . . .” or the man-interpreted precept which says, “Thou shalt kill . . .” is going to prevail in the end.

The vicinity of the Temple was not different from any other Eastern shrine. The profession of begging reaches its most artistic and finished perfection around these shrines. Blind, crippled and half-naked, men with crooked fingers which close over your dress or coat like claws of a vulture. Their ailments are often faked, but with such mastery that actors should study their art of make-up. As this army of beggars assailed me, vying with each other to exploit the pity and piety which they think must be in the heart of a visitor to the goddess, I thought of the noisy, gesticulating gamblers of the Stock Exchange. I always think that in similar surroundings. The crowd in both cases are, after all, playing on human credulity, on its desire to get riches, material or moral, without labour, without any struggle of a moral kind.

Inside the temple is a large stone court on to which the temple and the dependent buildings open. There are flower stalls and fruit stalls. Even the goddess who thrives on blood must have flowers; that is an inescapable part of the Indian nature.

In the middle of the court there was a rectangular dais, and under its roof and on the marble floor sat great scholars and saintly Hindus, reading or meditating. Opposite the dais, separated by a narrow corridor, was the temple itself in which the goddess Kali sat, her three heads muffled in flowers. Worshippers clung to the grille in front of her. A woman was crawling on her belly writhing and muttering something, imploring the goddess for some boon.

Behind the dais was the altar of sacrifice. The stone floor was stained with blood. Men passed in and out with a tiny black kid under their arms. Did I want to see the sacrifice? No. I have always run away from the sacrifice of sheep at our own annual feasts. The baby-goats look at one, and squeak in such a heart-breaking way.

When I described this visit to Mahatma Gandhi, he said with indignation in his voice: "I understand men killing when they want to eat meat, but to kill to please a goddess . . .!" And he added, "It is one of our shames. . . .!" No, Mahatma Gandhi, it is not only a Hindu shame. It is the shame of us all. Your struggle to end killing is also our struggle and mission. Pray and help us that we may all demolish Kali temples, and Kali worship in the world!

When we left the temple I was still musing on Kali. And Abdur Rahman's Hindu secretary was trying to explain to me the symbolic significance, and the necessity of recognizing Kali's mission in creation. He was a man with a kindly face, and very mild eyes. I can't imagine him killing even a chicken

in his home; but I can very well imagine him taking a goat to Kali, or even approving of blood spilt to appease the goddess. I said to myself: "Kali is the domination of the brain without the heart. Our deadliest enemy is our mind when we cut it away from collaboration with our heart. . . ." So I prayed that we may all be saved from that darkest thing in us, Intellect divorced from Heart!



## CHAPTER XVI

# Hyderabad

ON my way to Hyderabad I again thought of Sarojini. It is her native State and she told me that she had gone to school there riding on an elephant. That was the Hyderabad of forty-odd years ago. Now it is a model European city; motor-cars and limousines have taken the place of elephants, and over its excellent asphalt roads one sees the traffic controlled by policemen in uniform.

My host was to be Sir Akbar Hyderi. I had met him already at Delhi. He was spoken of as the cleverest financier of India. Not only is the Hyderabad budget perfectly balanced, but there is also a surplus dedicated for the emergency of famine—a modern Joseph, I said, when I was told about this extraordinary measure. But when I met Sir Akbar at Salam House, I could not bring myself to associate him with statistics, finance, and positive science. He seemed more a man of culture; as a matter of fact, I thought of him as a minister of education.

Sir Akbar is a man about sixty, rather portly, and always in European clothes. His manners are a mixture of the positive and practical West and the courteous East, with all its depth of feeling and thought. He has mild, kind eyes, and a well-trimmed round beard. On the whole one was more aware of his Eastern side, in spite of his astounding knowledge of English literature. This knowledge evidently surprises those who know him, for the British Resident in Hyderabad told me with some wonder that Sir Akbar could quote, not only Shakespeare like any cultured Englishman, but also secondary

poets with equal authority. This on the top of his magical ability in finance, seemed a unique combination to the British.

For me the uniqueness of Sir Akbar was of another sort. I have met many highly cultured Indians who could surprise one with their erudition in English literature, and their mastery of the double aspects of Eastern culture in India—Hindu and Muslem. But, in most cases, the two last remained in separate compartments in their minds, some being more inclined to the Hindu, and others to the Muslem. Usually they would try to impress one either with the superiority of the Hindu or the Muslem. Some believed in an amalgamation, or for political reasons paid lip service to the one which they considered the inferior. But Sir Akbar had reached a sense of the whole without conscious effort. He had achieved a unique cultural synthesis, and he had both intelligent and workable educational views. Whatever there was in India in the way of culture, Greek, Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslem, his mind embraced as a whole. The matchless beauty of Ellora and Ajanta caves (Buddhist remains) in Hyderabad, he cherished and was as proud of as he was of Muslem architecture or mystic works. So, though in age Sir Akbar belongs to the past generation, in mind he belongs to the future, too. For if India is to be kneaded into a nation, she must reach that unconscious synthesis of all her many-sided culture and thought.

Osmania University was the institution in which Sir Akbar was most interested, and I had heard enough about it to be keenly interested in it myself. I went to Hyderabad to speak to the Osmania students at his invitation, and I was to be his house guest.

One was at once conscious of good taste, beauty, and order in that house. Neither were these only on the surface. Whether a pantry, laundry, or a secret cupboard, every nook and

corner bore witness to the qualities of the mistress of the house. And the mistress of the house was Lady Amina. She belonged to the Tyebji family, and that in itself has a special significance in India. Every member of it from a very early period has been somebody of importance; and its women have been emancipated earliest among Muslems, while its men have always stood for progress. At the moment Begam Sherif Ali, a cousin of Lady Amina, is an international figure in the Feminist world; another woman cousin has made her mark in music.

Lady Amina herself belongs to no "ism." Temperamentally it would be impossible for her. One became aware of a perfect balance of mind and body the moment she appeared. She was a tall and handsome woman, perfectly dressed; and from the way she walked, talked, or looked at you, you could tell she was one whose faculties were held in poise. There also was something almost regal about her which reminded one of an English aristocratic lady living in a historic castle. But while the English lady would have had butlers, house-keepers, secretaries to take charge of the castle, Lady Amina took charge of every detail herself. She directed and controlled her crowd of servants single-handed, and arranged every social activity. Somehow one could not imagine her delegating any part of her power and duty to anyone else. From the kitchen to the drawing-room, from the homeliest to the most complicated ceremonial, it was her eagle eye which commanded. And that gave an absolute unity and harmony to her house. One wondered when she found the time for it all. For at tea, lunch, and dinner there were always visitors. Withal she went through her five daily prayer-times regularly. And only those who are familiar with Islamic prayers can realize the amount of time they take.



Besides which I found her in the early afternoons sewing or reading in her room. She showed no sense of hurry. Of all the busy women I knew she seemed to have the most leisure, and the most intelligent enjoyment of it.

I have several times spoken of the Muslem as being clearly outlined compared with the Hindu in India. Lady Amina was a supreme example of this. Just as a sculptor carves and finishes a statue for all time, she had carved and finished her soul. The wonder of it was that she had combined characteristics which hitherto seemed contradictory to me, at least in India. She was an Orthodox Muslem, yet had no trace of Communalism. She loved India and seemed unaware of the religious differences among them. Her attitude of mind to her countrymen reminded me of the saying of a Turkish Sultan, Mahmoud II: "I am not aware of any difference between my subjects though I know that some pray in a mosque, some in a church, and some in a synagogue." She shared her husband's love for non-Muslem art, but it did not develop in her the inferiority complex which at times embitters and distorts the Muslem mind in India. She never got excited over anything. Her values were too set. She could listen to any enthusiast of Hinduism or to any depreciation of Islam, with equal serenity, and in their midst rise and go to her prayers if it happened to be the time.

That she was capable of strong feeling I noted in two instances. First was her aversion to all forms of mysticism and exaggerated asceticism, especially the form which leads men to abandon human society. At first I thought this was due to the innate distaste of an Orthodox Muslem to exaggerated asceticism. But I understood that it was connected with a family tragedy. A near and beloved relative had been influenced by mysticism and turned a Fakir; and, after a short

life of austere asceticism, had died. The second instance of her capacity for feeling was in connection with her sense of friendship. I was incidentally a witness to her loyalty in friendship, and that made me an admirer of hers for life. Though a woman who was born for power, and power became her like a glove made to measure, there was nothing she would not sacrifice to friendship and affection. Perhaps it was this which endeared her to her personal friends, and roused antagonism in those who did not know her well. Especially the young, I noted among her friends, were devoted to her. Though she never once abandoned her austere manner, they found themselves at home with her.

She patronized educational institutions for women, and she took me to the schools for women. They were well run institutions under English principals of rather orthodox educational ideas. Hindus and Muslims mixed without any racial or religious antagonism. The one which impressed me most among the institutions she patronized was the orphanage. To me it seems the right sort of primary school for all India, properly adapted to the needs of the poverty-stricken masses if ever India should start a primary system on a general scale.

The students were composed of foundlings and homeless children of both sexes, the sexes being trained and educated separately.

We saw the boys first. They were between five and fourteen, dressed in clothes woven and made by themselves, shod with shoes the leather of which was tanned and cobbled by themselves. Weaving, carpentering, shoemaking, tanning, and a host of other trades and crafts which were necessities of life were all well taught, each student learning several of them to enable him to find a job easily. There was

not a single article in that institution, furniture, utensils, personal clothes, which had not been made by the students. These youngsters could be thrown into the jungle and be trusted to create a reasonable standard of life out of their practical knowledge.

Although quite a number of them were foundlings taken from the jungle, they were normal and healthy children, and were supplied with a very simple but carefully calculated diet.

The educational part was equally practical and well worked out. But the curriculum was taught in four different languages. I asked as to how they knew the origins of a foundling, and the language his parents talked. I was told that there was always a sign on the abandoned baby indicating the community and the religion its parents belonged to.

The girls' side was equally admirable. They were trained to be cooks, servants, wives, dressmakers. Domestic science was very carefully taught. I was told that the girls trained there were very much in demand, both for domestic service and as wives. But the man who wished to marry a girl from the orphanage had to produce good references of conduct and respectability. The bride was furnished with a reasonable amount of personal trousseau and household utensils, and the institution watched over her for several years until it was sure that the girl received decent treatment from the husband.

The boys' food was prepared by the girls, and their washing done by them. I was shown two kitchens, one for the Hindus and one for the Muslims. The separation was not due to vegetarianism, for all the Hindu students were of the meat-eating sects. It was only a Caste question: the Hindus could not eat food prepared by Muslims, or eat it with them.

The whole place was kept immaculately clean, and in the

simplest possible manner. No taste for any extra luxury or fancy was developed which might dissatisfy the inmates with the simple life they were destined to take up. I think His Exalted Highness, the Nizam, who is the supreme patron of the institution, is to be congratulated for this intelligent and practical view. For such institutions opened for the poor by rulers and great men are usually equipped with the latest fads and fancies in order to impress visitors, but which only make the inmates unfit for the life they are destined to live.

The institution was under the supervision of a Scotch couple, admirably suited and extremely able organizers and educators. I was specially impressed by the motherliness of the wife, in addition to her capacity. For children of that sort need a big heart, besides clear intellectual ability to train them.

At the dinner that evening I raised several issues in regard to this orphanage.

Why was the curriculum taught in four different dialects? Though it is natural and advisable that each child should know the language of the community to which it is supposed to belong, there must be one language in Hyderabad which is accepted as official, used for the intercourse of all communities in economic or other relations, and above all used for educational purposes.

Why should the Hindu and Muslem dine apart when both are meat-eaters? If the Hindu does not eat food cooked by Muslems, let the Muslems eat food cooked by Hindus. If a school cannot make its students near enough to each other to dine together, it has failed in its mission of creating citizens for a country.

Sir Akbar shook his head, and seemed to be aghast at my ignorance of Indian affairs. He said:

"We Muslims are the rulers, and if we did these things, we

would be taking advantage of our power and of the helplessness of these children whom we desire to save and educate."

I naturally respect the delicacy of feeling of Sir Akbar. But it was not at all ignorance which led me to ask these questions. I would have said nothing if India were content—as in the old days—to be a people composed of rigidly separated communities. But since I have been visiting India and talking with its people, everyone talked of unity, of nationhood, of co-operation between its members, and of independence at some future time. How could these children live and suffer and work hand in hand for India if they can't even dine together in school? But I realize that the situation in the native States is different from that of British India. The fact that the Muslem minority rules over a Hindu majority, and a Hindu minority over a Muslem majority, creates strange and difficult positions. Yet, if I had been visiting a State with a Hindu ruler, I would have made the same remark. With all respect for religious feeling there must be created a common national ground for the young where they can be the builders of a common and free country in which they are destined to govern.

. . . . .

I could give a long series of portraits of the women of Hyderabad whom I met in Lady Amina's house. I will give only three from the youngest generation who happen to be among her very close friends.

There is Princess Durru Shehwar, the wife of the heir-apparent. She happens to be an Ottoman Princess, but she has ceased to be anything but an Indian Princess, so well does she seem to have adapted herself to her environment, and taken to heart the duties that go with her high position, both as a wife and mother and as a woman of an unusually deep

culture. Being only twenty-three she might very well be Lady Amina's daughter. But to see the two of them together makes one wonder at the unusual maturity of the younger woman which makes her a friend of the older woman in a way only two persons of the same age can be.

I had seen the Princess in my country when she was a child in her early teens. Now as she stood by Lady Amina it was difficult to believe her to be the same person.

She is, I believe, about six foot tall, so she towers over the tallest. In spite of her queenly and dignified figure, she has a modest and somewhat timid air. The face, which was that of an extremely delicate child, is now one of the strongest human masks I have seen.

She was in a simple sari when I saw her, and innocent of all make-up and jewels. Her head, framed in muslin, stood erect on her powerful shoulders. It was a longish face, with a broad forehead, fair hair brushed back, and delicate but rounded chin. She had wide-apart and very large blue eyes, with level and well-arched strong eyebrows. The mouth was very small, very red, and fancifully chiselled, disclosing the whitest teeth imaginable. The nose begins straight and in the classical line, but it is long and turns slightly over the mouth.

Where had I seen this face? I wondered. And I knew at once. It was the portrait of Mohammad the Conqueror of Constantinople, as painted by Bellini. Strange that of all the members of that somewhat degenerate family she has inherited from the strongest and ablest of the dynasty. And it was a kindness of destiny that had placed her where she should be, for the early Ottoman mentality of those days was above all racial and religious differences. And, like the Conqueror, she also had a talent for poetical writing, and a passion for education.

She spoke Urdu quite fluently, and English like a native. That she was Turkish once I remembered when she called her pretty son "My sugar," in Turkish. As she has never been in Purdah she moves about freely, and is, I am told, a fine rider.

Of her grasp of the need of Hyderabad women, and what that State has accomplished in the way of education, there is no doubt when one reads the admirable speech she made at the Tenth Session of the Hyderabad State Women's Conference. It also shows to what degree she is interested in education, and how much she has taken after her illustrious ancestor. Here are some extracts from the speech she delivered at the Town Hall—that is, the English translation, for she spoke in Urdu:

"... Hyderabad is now my home. I identify myself with all your hopes and interests, your ambitions and aspirations, and the welfare of your children. . . . I have waited for the time when you would consider me as one of yourselves, and believe me I am always ready to co-operate with you in every way.

I have the greatest admiration and the deepest concern for the women of India: admiration for their unlimited patience and infinite courage, concern for the well-being of their present and future life. To-day women all over the world are awakening to the sense of their responsibility and privilege in shaping the destinies of the coming generations. Indian women who have so much to give because they have inherited the Indian ideals of loyalty, devotion, and graciousness, should be in the forefront in contributing to the service of humanity. To-day, women in almost every civilized country of the world are no longer parasites of dependence, but citizens of the soil that has bred them—with the right to exist, to take and to give; with the right to add to the honour of their nation and the ethos of their people. . . ."

After speaking about the Colleges for women, and men-

tioning the four primary schools in Hyderabad, she emphasizes admirably the need of primary education:

"There are thousands within the districts who are beyond the reach of this life-giving light. It must spread, must be available to all, available alike to rich and poor. . . ."

After mentioning the saying of Mohammad, "Superiority in knowledge is better than superiority in worship," she pays her tribute to Hindu philosophy which has equally elevated doctrines on the value of wisdom and learning, and she adds: "However, mere book-learning is not sufficient; it is but a fragment of the vast, immeasurable education which ought to banish narrow-mindedness, create sympathy, understanding, and eradicate superstition, prejudice, and fear."

Throughout the speech she shows a maturity and seriousness difficult to connect with a person of her age. And after paying a genuine tribute to His Exalted Highness, the Nizam, to whom she really is attached like a daughter, she goes on to the problem of the economic independence of women. Though a Princess, her conviction is that women "must be taught the dignity of work. Every woman ought to be in a position to support herself by means of an honourable livelihood should the occasion arise. It is a matter of pride and not humiliation to add to the meagre family income by one's own endeavour."

So she goes on, touching on all educational questions and the necessity of progress, which indicates a woman of thought and judgment.

The other two young friends of Lady Amina are the daughters of Sarojini Naidu. Charming, both, and representative of their mother in different ways. Padmaja is a thing of beauty, a soft and kind person, hard-working and studious.



Lelamuni is a perfect tiger, with an arresting face and figure, eyes of fire, and the devil of a temperament. Of the two I thought the little tiger had more of the mother's extraordinary incalculableness; and with her talent and education she could be a great asset to any movement. At the moment she seemed not to have made her choice of the particular field in which she meant to work.

I had a surprise in Hyderabad. I saw Kamala Devi. She had taken the trouble to come all the way from the South to see me. And when she told me she would be at Wardha during my visit to Mahatma Gandhi's headquarters, I felt very happy. For it would give me the opportunity to study one of the really telling workers of New India in a field which it is difficult for the stranger to reach.

Osmania University is a constant topic of conversation in India. Until the Jamia it had been the unique institution where higher education was given in Urdu. And to do that means more than it appears. For Urdu has not the technical terms and the phraseology sufficiently developed to give a specialized scientific education. Nor can such be coined at will. Technical terms may be adopted from the West, but the phraseology demands thought behind it. Only scholars and scientists who are in the habit of thinking in scientific terms in Urdu can transfer to it scientific and philosophic thought from an alien language. For this scholars from Hyderabad have been sent constantly to European Universities. Not merely youths to obtain degrees, but mature men, who after taking their degree, specialize, and go into research work. There is now a

vast organization for translating into Urdu philosophical and scientific Western works, both for the purpose of texts and for reference. Dr. Mackenzie, an able Scotchman, with power to organize, and the knowledge necessary to create a University on a par with European Universities, is at the head of this organization. It is a pleasure to listen to him tell how it is done; how different bodies of scholars are at work on particular subjects, and how correlation between these different groups is achieved. There is method, plan, and forethought behind this vast and most important work. Hyderabad has its scholars and savants, both on native culture, and on European culture. For the University is a seat of learning with a definite tradition behind it. Quite a number of outstanding men were pointed out to me who were working on special lines in history, philosophy or science. One of them I already knew in Paris, Dr. Hamidullah, from the Sorbonne, who had made himself an honourable position in the university circles of Paris by his work in historical research.

Among the older and crudit scholars with unusual synthetic power in cultural research and critical works on Urdu along new objective lines is Maulana Abdul Haq. Not only as a scholar, but also as one of the brains behind this remarkable work, he is constantly mentioned. Abdul Haq is a man with a round white beard, and always dressed in a tightly-buttoned coat. He lives a quiet life, entirely devoted to study, research and writing, and is a man of few words.

In the creation of this remarkable work, Osmania, His Highness the Nizam, the ruler of the State, is the supreme patron and promoter. He seems to have put his heart into making Hyderabad a centre of learning, and is being liberal about it. Sir Akbar seems enthusiastic over it and leaves nothing undone to make the University something even

above the first standard to which it already belongs. Maulana Abdul Haq is the savant who is giving it its creative form.

If such a great effort is being made for its academic standing and its creativeness, there is also a remarkable plan to build a new University such as India has not yet seen. Two million rupees are going to be spent on it. The plan has been done by native architects after a study of two years in different European centres. The site is ready, the roads and the necessary drainage are done, and some of the buildings have been begun. So in two years' time there will rise one of the most remarkable Universities, both as regards buildings and in academic standing, in the Urdu language. For the moment the University carries on its teaching in the old buildings.

The last day and evening I had a strange and fascinating sense of Hyderabad. A dinner was given by the Osmania University under a huge tent. Pleasant and short speeches. Then came the Mushaara. The name took me to old, old Turkey, of even before my time. I mean the time when bards with their stringed instruments sang in competitions in popular gatherings in café houses. The poems were improvised, and the best performers got prizes in the form of silk draperies hung all over the café house. That was mushaara, poetical competition. And the habit is preserved in India still, though the poets who enter the competition do not play on stringed instruments, nor do they improvise. They come prepared, their poems written.

It was held in a huge tent, so crammed that a great many were obliged to stand, for there were not enough places to sit. By the door there was a sofa, covered with red silk, embroidered in gold, before it a hookah. The Prime Minister,

a Hindu, but himself a poet in Urdu, was to preside. He was in native costume: a pleasant old gentleman who squatted on the splendid sofa, smoked his hookah, and listened to the poets with evident enjoyment. Before his sofa sat the poets. One by one they read their poems.

First there were the old-fashioned poems in Urdu. They were chanted in a sing-song voice, and any verse appreciated by the audience roused tremendous applause, and the poet salaamed and repeated the verse. Sometimes the poet stopped deliberately and looked round when he reached a certain verse which he, I suppose, imagined to be worthy of applause. The audience responded good-humouredly, and he salaamed, satisfied, and continued. It was evident that these old pieces were in Persian clichés. They reminded me of the old *Divans*<sup>1</sup> of classic Turkey . . . The wind of dawn, the burning sun, the nightingale, the rose, the wine, the cupbearer . . . all were there.

When the new-fashioned poets began I understood nothing. It was evident that the Persian clichés were being abandoned, and there was no longer any sing-song declamation. Though I understood less, it was more familiar. It was the modern East. Nevertheless the applause was equally strong. When we left the tent it was nearly midnight, but the poets and the audience seemed as keen and as wideawake as ever. So my last glimpse of Hyderabad was a reflection of its past days, a past which we all share.

<sup>1</sup> Collection of poems of old Turkish poets.



## CHAPTER XVII

# Bombay

DURING the long railway journey from Wardha to Bombay I watched the stations with an attention as intense as on my first journey from Bombay to Delhi. I was once more trying to grasp and size up the relative importance of the Indian triangle—English, Muslem, Hindu.

The stations were English, and formed the background. But the English themselves are scarcely visible. Occasionally a single officer passed hurriedly, or a few civilians walked up and down the platform, always in company with Indians. The rigid barrier between the ruler and the ruled has gone. There are also the railway officials who represent the English, but these are mere reminders of their existence. To the casual observer, if there were no "Hindu chai, Mussulman chai" cry the scene would be entirely Indian, a varied spectacle of costume and colour.

There are rich men, poor men, and beggar men. The first are rare and pass followed by servants, their ladies lifting their saris so that they shall not touch the crowd. The other ninety-nine per cent appear to be the poorest one could meet anywhere. They wear turbans of all colours, caps, and a few have fezes. They are seen as fixtures in the stations, sitting on their bundles together with their families. They come there, hours before the time, live there, eat, even sleep. That even the poor crowd has partly crossed the barrier between the Old and New is evident from the dresses of their women. Saris are the new; the white shrouds with holes only for the eyes, covering the figures from the top of the head to the toe, are the old. These

look like tombstones in motion, but are fewer than the saris, and are the ghosts of a dead and dying past!

We were in the middle of March, and there was a heat-wave in the country. Dust, dust, dust. . . . It penetrated into everything, nostrils, throats and lungs, and though the electric fans were in motion they gave no relief. They turned with such rapidity that they seemed like strange butterflies. And they made me think of something . . . what? The punkah-man. He is no more. Has this Western mechanical contrivance relieved the poor punkah-man from perpetual service to the rich, or has it made him sink into unemployment, penury, or to even more degrading service?

At Bombay I was a guest in the house of the Chief Justice, Faiz Tyebji. Both husband and wife belong to that distinguished family, being cousins. The house was such another as Lady Amina's in its tasteful arrangements and strict order, only on a more modest scale. And it was full of visitors.

Mrs. Tyebji is a tall, handsome woman, extremely friendly and an excellent hostess. She is at that agreeable stage where Indian women are modern without being uprooted, or imitations of the West. They represent a careful graduation of change which saves them from stagnation, yet preserves their personality.

Contacts with the women's side:

A lecture at the Princess Victoria Mary Gymkhana Hall, where upper-class Bombay women were assembled. There were also upper-class Englishwomen, including the lady of the Governor . . . a tall, beautiful young Englishwoman. There was one man, the aide-de-camp of Her Excellency. Straight-backed, and with a handsome, healthy face. Shy? No wonder, being the only man among such a crowd of

women. Then there was the garden party. Everything took place pleasantly, beautifully. . . .

Then the meeting of all the clubs in the Unity Club hall. That was a mixed affair, women of all classes of thought and rank, and quite a number of professional women. The usual speeches. . . .

A tall, thin, almost gaunt woman in black and white came and sat by me. She had a sitar in her hand, which she tuned. Her head was slightly inclined to one side, and her ear intent on catching the sound, while her long strong fingers moved on the strings like spiders trying to spin a web. Framed in black and white, embroidered with silver, the profile was arresting. The cheeks were sunken and furrowed, and the chin long and pointed; the lines along the cheek and chin reminded one of a by-path near a volcano, where lava has flowed through open deep crevasses. The correspondence between the soul and the mask of this woman, I think, was complete. Her mask showed the very essence, the very shape of her passion-consumed soul. . . .

And she sang *Bande Mataram* (Hail, Mother), the Indian anthem.

A low contralto. Notes that came out of that long throat like those of a string "üinnnggg, üinnnggg . . ." they vibrated, then there was intense silence. And each note went deeper into one's heart, disturbingly. . . .

"*Bande Mataram . . . Bande Mataram . . .*"

What matters the meaning of a song which makes a people lose its head and heart? What is there extraordinary in the words of the "*Marseillaise*"? What is there in the words . . . ?

What *Bande Mataram* meant to India I sensed in her voice. She pronounced it *Bendiüüü*, and that pull of the "d" she sang with clenched teeth, with rage, as if she were biting and



tearing her own heart out of her bosom. And what it did to the listener made me think of an absurd but significant Greek word—Anakatomena. It means “upside-downness,” and in the popular Greek is used to signify any strange and strong emotion which makes one lose oneself; it also describes sea-sickness. Her voice turned one’s faculties upside down, and made one’s emotion as uncontrollable as sea-sickness. Before I knew how it had happened tears were rolling down my cheeks, and I was not only unashamed of crying in public, but also unable to wipe those tears away. I got a sense of India from her voice which nothing else so far had given me. It evoked a nation on honeymoon, in the love and peace of its revolution, a divine folly which makes old and young hold hands, crying aimlessly, and walk up and down the streets singing, “Motherland . . .”

“There are some women who want to see you in the other room,” said the President of the Club, and she led the way through the corridor to a big back-room.

There were thirty-five women dressed in hand-woven orange cotton. It was the revolutionary colour, I suppose. It was once the colour of the Rajputs in their struggle against the Muslem invasion. Now it has ceased to be against the Muslem evidently, for there were two Muslem women among them. The colour has come to be a symbol for those who aim to obtain India’s Independence through struggle and sacrifice. They were all dedicated to India, sworn to celibacy, poverty, and service, and each belonged to some line of Social-Welfare. All had passed the stage of “I” and “Thou.”

They sat on the floor, but they had prepared some cushions for the speaker to sit on. The speaker sat with them on the floor, and said nothing. The faces evoked other memories,

women ready to march to a scaffold for the love of country, women hunted and persecuted in the mountains. . . . We shook hands, some embraced me, and we parted in silence.

. . . . .

Begam Mooni, a famous songstress of Bombay, sang at Begam Tyebji's house. She is classed with Nuri-Jihan as an artist. But she is less accessible, and those who can get her to sing for them are few, I am told.

She sat on cushions, and we on chairs. She also had two bearded and turbaned musicians whom she controlled with her hands as Nuri-Jihan had done. But she herself was utterly different from Nuri-Jihan. An austere figure in white, a face innocent of all make-up, and as grave as a Koran-chanter. A cultured, serious, and thoughtful woman. And her art reached its apogee when she sang the Muslem classics. She gave no terrestrial tinge of passion to them. She is no doubt a mystic who has reached inner quietude. Her emotion was serene and intellectual. She came nearest to the pandit in Mahatma Gandhi's prayers who sang that hymn from Tulsidas.

After singing she asked for us to be photographed together.

. . . . .

My previous hosts, Dr. and Mrs. Hamid, offered me another artistic treat that evening. They got a famous Hindu cinema-star to dance for me in their spacious hall.

And there she was amid the gay figures of society and several members of the intelligentsia. Among them were her American managers. They gave a Hollywood tone to that Indian assembly, so much so that I wondered whether all the Indian spectacle which I had been watching these months was not a trick of some film-land fancy.

Meanwhile the young star was too substantial to be a

dream. She must be as hard to manage as any star in the West, for evidently the managers have not been able to make her slim to the degree film-land demands. She was quite plump, but fortunately tall, so that it did not matter. And she sat by me eyeing me, sizing me up from the corners of her almond-shaped eyes. She narrowed her lids suddenly, turned them into near lines, and from the slits two black eyes shone. She was copiously made up, and her eyebrows were as carefully plucked as those of Joan Crawford. Her pretty face had a perfect oval outline, and alert piquant features. She gave herself a suavity and coyness, though one felt her wayward and capricious . . . a complete minx!

She was clothed in pink gauze embroidered with gold, a part of it covering her dark, sleek head. It glistened as she moved, and she moved constantly. Rather fidgety, I thought; but a stylized fidget—the wriggle of the hips, the shrug of the shoulders, the restless crossing and recrossing of the long legs . . . all that looked studied.

The musicians were at the other end of the hall. She rose and walked to a screen behind them; and, after a time, emerged dressed in the clothes of a Hindu dancer, her slim ankles encircled with castanets.

She danced in the middle of the room where carpets were removed for the purpose. The tuneful tinkle of the castanets at her ankles controlled her rhythmic motion as much as the orchestra itself; and the dance, they told me, had a religious significance. Everything does have that significance, even when it expresses sex. And her dance did that to a degree. She was enacting a scene from the Hindu Parnassus; Krishna, the chief god, pursuing a milkmaid. The ankles shook and the bells around them jingled more and more musically. To me Lord Krishna seemed as unfaithful a husband and untiring

a lover as Zeus. Like his Greek colleague Krishna was also trying to taste terrestrial pleasure—simple women must be more alluring than a goddess, for the purpose of love. So the dance went on, the chief god insistent and passionate in his pursuit, the maiden elusive, inviting, and wanting to be kissed and caressed. All that to me seemed like any scene from ancient Greek reliefs portraying the loves of Zeus, and dancing. But if I had told that to any Hindu friend the answer would have been, “You don’t understand; it is all symbolic. . . .”

After changing into her pink gauze draperies she came back and sat by me wiping her face. The managers ogled her—they were anxious lest she should tire herself too much.

“Have you been to the South,” she asked.

“Alas, no.”

“You should have seen at least the Ajanta and Ellora caves,” she said. That I was too busy to do so she could not understand. She probably accused me of lack of a sense of right values. What public speech or lecture could ever be more important than seeing those caves?

“She is from the South herself,” said someone behind me.

“Yes, I am from the South,” she repeated, and became as simple and natural as the rest of us. The stylized fidget, the star-manners were forgotten. “Dancing and beauty belong to the South.”

“What is the difference between the dancing in the North and South?”

“Did you notice how I danced the Krishna scene?”

“Yes, all in round curves. . . .”

She pulled her chair nearer, and I believe she gave me a good mark this time. “After all, the old thing does observe,” she may have thought.

"That is it. The South is all angles, lines, be they long, short or broken . . . that is their uniqueness and beauty. The North is all curves . . ." she seemed to think not much of curves. And she told me of her hours and hours of study of the Southern figures in Ellora and Ajanta caves, in the South, in Temples, in pictures, and in life. I felt the serious artist behind the pink gauze dress. It was not only for money and fame that she toiled, evidently. She had the divine fever of the real artist. I forgot all about the plucked eyebrows and the stylized fidget. What some of us are drudging at, struggling to do in words, she was trying to do in movements.

"I'll dance for you and show you what I mean . . ." she said, rising, and going behind the screen.

This time she came out in a simple tunic, still with the castanets on her ankles. In a moment she was all angles, triangles, right angles, every manner of angle which has been conceived by Euclid . . . all lines and geometry. The very oval of her face had become angular, the jaws sticking out, the face broadened, the neck straight or slanting, the elbows out, the knees out, the feet out. . . . From the top of the head she was angle upon angle . . . one set changed into another, but still the geometrical harmony remained. I could see the black lights glistening through the slits, the squeezed lids, and a fierce grin on the tense jaws. . . .

I had promised my friend Mme Mulle, the directrice of the School of Social Service in Brussels, to visit a social service centre in India, and send her some literature concerning the movement. So I went to see the Hindu Social Service Centre in Bombay, the best known and best organized in India. I am grateful to Mme Mulle, for this visit brought me face

to face with Slumland and the workers' problems; at least, with the most prominent aspects of them. What I can say about them naturally consists of passing remarks, but the thoughts they roused rounded off and completed my view of India.

The institution is in the native quarter. An elderly man received us, and showed us round. On the medical side I saw an efficient-looking Hindu woman-doctor receiving the poor women and their babies. They looked inconceivably destitute and dazed.

The lecture-rooms, reading-rooms, workshops, etc., reminded me of Toynbee Hall. The workers can spend profitable evenings or attend classes, practical or theoretical, to advance their knowledge or to practise in whatever craft they happen to be working. Though the whole arrangement follows the Toynbee Hall idea, the institution was not an imported thing. It was evidently created on the spot to answer the crying needs of the labouring population, the method being the only importation. From its literature one felt that it had a root, a past history. The influence which has shaped it goes back to the rational, social reform period of the Calcutta Brahma-Samaj movement.

To the casual observer the problems have resulted from a too quick industrialization, and from the abuses of capitalism, foreign or native, before there was protective legislation for the worker. The greatest evils are underpayment and too long hours. Hence bad housing, cramming, lack of sanitation, lack of protection from unemployment, etc.

The man who took us around, a grave and pleasant person with genuine sympathy with misery in the labour field, made the usual remark when comparing labour conditions with agrarian conditions. To him, the peasant was the better placed. No wonder, for he lived among the workers himself, and was

overpowered by the misery of their lot. But I shook my head and said nothing. The argument that the peasant at least has the fresh air and the open sky above him is a much abused and meaningless phrase to me. Even the argument that the peasant is at least out of the reach of the vice and the temptation of city surroundings leaves me cold. For India at least to say that the peasant is in a better condition, is wrong. Because:

The peasant is hungrier. The wage of a city labourer, however low, provides the worker with bread. The peasant is at the mercy of rain, moneylender, and tax-gatherer. Further, while the days of the worker are filled, the peasant has nothing to do for three-quarters of the year. Excessive leisure degrades and demoralizes even millionaires, let alone the hungry, the miserable, and the sick. Even a well-fed peasant, if condemned to inaction for eight months of the year, would become brutalized. Semi-starved, he becomes totally devitalized in body, and deteriorated in mind. I wouldn't wonder if imbecility is not found in a large percentage in the rural districts. The labourer may become vicious, but he rarely becomes an imbecile; for he has at least some social centre in the city where he may pass his leisure. Even for vice, as a person who has lived with villagers and has observed them closely, I can say that fresh air and the beautiful blue sky is no barrier to the particular brand of vices which the rural population, divorced from work and condemned to misery, develop. Further, in times of sickness, child-birth, malaria, etc., the worker can get some sanitary help, while the peasant, man or woman, has next to no relief.

"The Indian peasant is better off than the slum population of London," said a woman to me. No, madam. He is not. A visit to Lucknow villages and another to London slums

will at once give you the right idea. Further, in London or elsewhere the slum population are 10 per cent at the utmost; in India the rural slumlands are 90-odd per cent of the entire population. And this is, to a lesser extent, the problem of the entire East.

As long as the East, I thought, had this thin surface of industrialization in the city, and makes no attempt to clear the strata on strata of misery in the rural districts where the bulk of the nation lives, the destiny of the East will be incalculable. It will lie between a *much more intense and degrading colonization*, or a revolution of a shattering kind which will uproot the entire civilization and the people themselves. A revolution such as those who speak about it in heated rooms, or write of it in revolutionary pamphlets, cannot conceive in the wildest flights of their imaginations.

Of my contacts with men in Bombay I have three distinct memories. Let me add that wherever there were men there were also women; but the significance of these mixed gatherings had a far more symptomatic side. They were mixed in the sense that every community attended them. The barriers of caste and community had melted away. It gave me a deep sense of satisfaction, even if I knew that such good moments do not last. But that did not matter; for bad moments do not last either.

The first of such gatherings was the garden party on a grand scale. There was a Harijan doctor at my table, drinking tea and eating with the rest of those men who might have, at some time in the past, never dreamed of such a thing.

Then there was the lecture in a public hall, presided over by the Mayor. A sea of faces, and all belonging to a vast



number of sects and castes, even outcastes. Speeches do not matter. But when the distinguished and charming Parsee, Mr. Narriman, spoke and said that this was a unique occasion when all the communities had gathered in that hall, I felt profoundly touched, and happy too. For it is an incorrigible hope and everlasting dream of mine to see men love their brothers, and live and share their every burden.

The last instance was the Intercommunal Dinner on the roof of the same public building. We were about four hundred men and women of all colours, races, faiths, and classes eating together. We all ate Hindu food, served on green leaves. Above us was the Indian sky, milkish white-blue, speckled with stars—so low that we could stretch our hands and pick stars from the firmament. . . . It was not merely a physical sensation either. . . . The atmosphere of fraternal peace gave one the feeling that it may not after all be impossible to pick stars from God's heaven as one picks flowers from a terrestrial garden.

Thus ended my visit to India. How deeply grateful I felt to Dr. Ansari for giving me this opportunity. It was as if a primary-grade student of life had wandered into a post-graduate class. I have seen, heard, tasted, and looked on the "beginning of Time," and the "end of Time." When I have digested it all, I must give my report as an objective eyewitness of India in the year of grace 1935, I said to myself.

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PART III

India in the Melting-pot



## CHAPTER XVIII

# Hinduism in the Melting-pot

EVERY human society is like a melting-pot. The contents may be known and measured, but the fire, which is life itself, is incalculable. For no one knows how and by whom it is regulated; the only thing certain is that in transition periods the action of the fire is intensest, and the contents reach boiling point.

All the East is more or less at that point. Something is being prepared, but as to its final appearance no one can make an exact guess. The student of history may draw up an approximate list of the pot's contents, but none can foretell what they will be when the Transition Period is over. For, besides the action of the fire, there is also personality, the imponderable in the human being, which may give a new turn to events.

Those who want history to be a pure science demand that it should be absolutely depersonalized. Henry Adams goes as far as to demand that personalities be presented as mere symbols of forces in action, as impersonal as  $x$ ,  $y$ , or  $z$ . On the other hand, those who regard history as the sum-total of the achievements of outstanding personalities are inclined either to underestimate, or completely neglect, the impersonal forces by which those personalities have been formed.

Neither of these schools of thought has said the last word. The sensible student of history must take a middle course. That is, he must use the personalities of the particular period and nation under study, just as an artist uses colours and forms, to express his idea; always keeping in mind that,

though personalities are in part merely expressions of contemporary ideas, and the result of undiscovered forces of social evolution, they still give by their own initiative unforeseen turns to the trend of events. At the present moment there is such a galaxy of domineering figures in the world that the student of history might easily believe that history is nothing more than their achievements, irrespective of social laws. To guard against this tendency the student should always study the past history of any nation which he aims at understanding. He will see then that, as each great figure who has dominated a nation's history passes away, the forces which have made that figure possible emerge. Though no nation is exactly the same after a strong eruptive or disruptive human being has affected its life, still, the moment his influence declines, the historical forces previously at work assert an equilibrium between what has been and what is. That is what gives continuity to society and enables the student to size up to some extent the history of a people as a whole.

In this third part the writer found it more than ever necessary to bear in mind the older forces at work in India; and this necessity was more urgent in the case of the Hindus than in that of the Muslims or of the English; for contemporary Hindu Society has a host of unusual figures at work in it. Foremost among them stands Mahatma Gandhi, who seems to have a unique significance, not only for India, but for the whole world. This inevitably tempts the student to regard India's future through the mind and activities of one man. Therefore the writer has had to make a special effort to sort out those *forces* which have had a formative influence upon Mahatma Gandhi, in order to take a balanced view of India in general, and of Modern Hindu Society in particular.

**What is Hinduism?**

Hinduism, for the writer, is an immense amorphous force with limitless tentacles which suck at every form of life and thought that comes within its reach. This amorphism, however, is in its spirit, not in its form; for the moment anything comes under Hindu influence it is classified and woven into the Hindu pattern. Hence the strange vagueness of the Hindu and the rigid pattern of his life. In no human society can one meet individuals with such unlimited freedom of mind, yet living such minutely regulated lives. One may see a Hindu whose metaphysical conception of God is a thousand years ahead of his time, and another whose conception of God is as elementary as of a primitive man; yet both of them—so far apart in mental development—will object to any breach of the rules of life which Hinduism has prescribed for their respective castes.

The mental elasticity of Hinduism has always served to regulate new forces which have threatened to change its rigid outer pattern. Its method is to inoculate itself with the new thought-germs, and so preserve its body from serious infection. Is the new force a religion? Then Hinduism will give seats to its gods in the Hindu Pantheon. Is it some social or economic theory? That also Hindu thought will assimilate without disturbing its pattern of life. The fate of Buddhism is perhaps the most characteristic example of this subtle assimilation. Though its birthplace was India, and it reached its highest expression there, Hinduism eventually added to itself as much as it could, and rejected the rest from India as a separate entity. Hinduism is now immune from Buddhism. The issue between them was as interesting as the final triumph of Hinduism, for one is thereby enabled to understand it more clearly. Buddhism insisted on bringing its doctrines near to the life of the people. Hinduism objected to any unifying

doctrine which would disturb the caste system. Buddhism is anti-caste, but allows divisions according to occupation—so far its economic structure could be used as the basis of a society of guilds. Hinduism by adding occupational categories to already existing castes, assimilated the economic structure of Buddhism, without destroying its own.

Islam is the next great disruptive force. Once more the tentacles of Hinduism reached out and inoculated itself with what it could, but not enough to keep itself completely immune. For one thing, Allah and Mohammad would not and could not be accommodated in the Hindu Pantheon; and the economic and social principles of Islam forbade any form of partition in the social system. The one uncompromising and unchangeable Islamic principle is to bring its doctrines to the lives of the people, consequently the advent of Islam began to change the Hindu pattern here and there. The Sikh Movement is one example. Further, it brought unrest into that part of the Hindu world it could not alter; for Islam planted itself as a fixture on Indian soil, and became a part of Indian life, without losing its identity. The struggle to find a *modus vivendi* between Islam and Hinduism became a process internal to India. For the first time Hinduism had come into immediate contact with a force it could neither assimilate nor eject. This was a turning-point for Hinduism. It meant it had to devise a means of living side by side with a society based on a conception utterly different from its own.

Christianity and Western influences came in their turn, and brought more disruption. The dilemma of Hinduism became twofold. Whereas it has hitherto concerned itself with internal adjustments only, now it was to adjust itself to the outside world as well. Its original pattern, already cracked and patchy through contact with Islam, now became more so. The

religious and social reforms of Hinduism in the nineteenth century were attempts to assimilate these new influences without any formal change; but, instead the breaches were widened, and the Hindu society hitherto unified became like separate islands cut off from each other, needing to be bridged.

Meanwhile political doctrines from the West, percolating through University education, brought about a new conception of nationhood. The first sign of this political awakening was the inauguration of the Congress. Inadequate as it was, it aimed for the first time at representing the Indian people, and by its nature would necessarily concern not only India but also the outside world. An Independent India, considering its resources and its three hundred million souls, could have no small effect on the polity of nations.

The creation of the Indian Congress was due to an English Liberal and Radical—Allan Octavian Hume. He saw that "Pax Britannica" had failed to solve economic problems; that the peasantry were in a desperate state; and that unless the administration included a native element, the Indian masses had no means of expressing their grievances and getting redress. The first Congress was an attempt to bring together men who thought on these lines, and to enable them to create a body which would formulate the country's needs, and determine how to meet them. It first met in 1885 at Bombay, and was composed of a few lawyers, schoolmasters, and newspaper editors. Their main demand was that the natives should have a wider participation in the civil as well as in the military services of India. That first Congress could hardly be called representative, but in three years its number had grown into more than a thousand, and its field of representation had widened.

Critics of the early Congress have called it a fractional



minority. They have said that it was a completely middle-class affair, having no direct contact with the masses. They have also attributed its struggles to job-hunting. All of which is true. But there was another aspect to it. In twenty years the participation of the natives in the civil side at least of Indian life was increasing continuously. It was leading the Indian Government to pass laws and regulations in favour of Indians of certain class; for to the foreign rulers, India was no longer merely a gem in the imperial crown, but a country where certain classes of people had to be placated. For the masses this was the first *symbol of their nationhood*, and an early landmark of representative government.

Although the laws passed since 1885 have not done away with economic misery, nor with the barriers between classes, still, Congress has discussed them, and propagated ideas through a Press which has developed widely. It has also among its members some very outstanding patriots and men of vision who have been aware of the needs of the masses. Politically its aims were:

(1) To obtain self-government by constitutional means, and in no way to break away from Great Britain; (2) to institute a form of government of a Western type, which, however, they did not have very clearly in mind, nor had they considered any possible evolution of the indigenous elementary forms of government which already existed in the country.

Although there were revolutionary tendencies not always in keeping with these principles, and although they occasionally got the upper hand, still, Constitutionalism has remained a stable element in the policy of the Congress. It is noteworthy that revolutionary trends, in so far as they were Hindu, were usually from Bengal; and that in its early days

it was predominantly a Hindu organization. But its revolutionary tendencies were by no means simple, or all in the same direction. A few alternatives may be given:

(i) Independence (Swaraj) with or without England, by constitutional or revolutionary means.

(ii) All barriers between Indians to be broken; India to be a unified nation.

(iii) Hinduism to be further strengthened, and every foreign element, including the Muslem, to be extirpated.

Although the third is at times described as reactionary, it has been violent enough and virulent enough to be called revolutionary at the same time.

Up to the Great War, Congress remained predominantly Hindu, but afterwards Muslems entered it in increasing numbers year by year. Of their direct influence we will speak later. Among constitutional figures the most outstanding Hindu—in the mind of the writer—is Gokhale, the founder of the Servants of India Society and the Fergusson College. He is a brilliant example of the fact that the pro-Western and constitutional middle-class members of Congress were by no means always men who were ignorant of India, or who merely wanted jobs. He is the last among the outstanding congressmen who wanted the political constitution of India to be more or less a copy of Western Democracy; to have it by the consent and in co-operation with Great Britain; and to maintain unity without altering the fundamentals of Hinduism. His importance also lies in the fact that he had an enormous influence on the mind of Mahatma Gandhi.

While such men as these, with the willing or unwilling help of Great Britain, were evolving a Western type of Constitution, others were also at work. First, the example of Japan stimulated in some a desire for complete independence, and for

industrialization on capitalist (native) lines. Next, the example of the Russian Revolution stimulated in others anti-British, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist feelings, and a desire to industrialize on anti-capitalist lines. It also created a great deal of agitation in favour of the masses.

With all these forces at work, the Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, entered on its unique open struggle with Great Britain.

As Mahatma Gandhi's activities are in certain ways a continuation, and in others a turning point in Hinduism, and as they touch on other fields besides politics, and on problems which concern not only Hinduism but all India and the outside world as well, they must be dealt with separately.

## CHAPTER XIX

# Mahatma Gandhi and India

To understand the influence of the forces on Mahatma Gandhi, mentioned in the preceding chapter, a brief account of the formative processes of his life is necessary.

The first stage of this process in Mahatma Gandhi's childhood.

His family belonged to the Bania Caste, and one of his forebears had been a grocer. But for three generations previous to Mahatma Gandhi his family had given prime ministers to a small native state. Kaba Gandhi, his father, was both prime minister at Porbandar and a member of the Rajasthanik Court (now extinct), where disputes between chiefs and their clansmen were settled. So the Mahatma inherited a practical business mind, and in early life lived among men who had a hand in ruling a part of India, and who had a judicial and experienced outlook with regard to human affairs. Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar in 1869.

If what he inherited or learned from his father has been useful in helping him to handle men and events, the temperament which eventually gave a Messianic turn to his life he inherited from his mother. She was a saintly and religious woman, fasting or semi-fasting during the four months of the rainy season, which are a kind of long Hindu Lent. She would take the hardest vows and keep them, not only in the letter but in the spirit as well. She would often take a vow not to eat until she saw the sun. In those days her children would stand staring at the sky, then run to their mother to announce the appearance of the sun. She would come out to

see it with her own eyes, and if by that time it had disappeared she would continue her fast until she saw it again.

At twelve he was married, as was the custom of his community. He acted as any other Hindu boy towards his girl-bride. Until he was eighteen, other than an excessive sensibility and timidity, there is nothing to mark him off as distinct from any other Hindu lad. His reflexes were so well conditioned by Hinduism that he found no joy in trespassing its prescribed boundaries. He had his share of temptations, he even ate meat which was a breach of religious observance according to his Caste; and it gave him no joy. He remarks with a certain humour that he could hear the goat (it was goat's meat) bleating in his tummy all night long. Apart from his extra-truthfulness and an innate tendency to self-analysis, we can call him, at this stage, a conformist with a strongly developed moral sense.

After his father's death his brother, on the advice of a Brahman friend, sent him to England to study law. His mother worried a great deal lest he should be tempted to break the rules of his religion. To put her mind at rest he promised to eat no meat, to drink no alcohol, and to refrain from intercourse with women. He observed these rules with the same honesty as his mother used to observe her religious vows. In brief, he promised to remain, and he did remain, a Hindu in the strictest sense.

The second stage of the process was in England.

Outwardly he remained the same decent, honest, and studious Hindu. His youthful foibles with regard to dress and to playing the English gentleman he cured himself of, thanks to a keen sense of humour, and to his economic habits. But it was in England that he first began to weigh and question certain things he had so far taken for granted. Diet

and religion were the two principal topics his mind concentrated upon.

In vegetarian restaurants he met thoughtful Englishmen of note, and discussed with them the merits of vegetarianism. Through them he began to read up the subject and consider the effect of vegetarianism on man's health and behaviour. Henceforth, vegetarianism for him was no longer merely an inherited religious observance. It became a conviction, a freely accepted rule of life. Neither was this conviction without a scientific basis. He experimented, and still experiments, on individual and collective diet, not only with religious zeal but in a scientific spirit. Hygienically vegetarianism seemed superior, and morally a necessity, since man, as the superior animal, is bound to protect the lower animals. As to its influence on behaviour, he saw that the vegetarian was less aggressive and more capable of restraining his passion.

It was through his Christian friends that he became acquainted with Western thought, religious and otherwise. Ruskin and Tolstoy were dominant influences on his general outlook on life, and on the educational institutions which he created at a later stage. He studied the Christian Scriptures, and he was profoundly affected by the Sermon on the Mount. His realization of the greatness of the Hindu Scriptures also came to him through reading the English translation of Gita by Edwin Arnold, *Song Celestial*. After that he became a student of the Gita, and eventually became a follower of it. He interprets everything he does or believes in its light; and is convinced that even those things which seem to the outsider as outside influences are among the teachings of the Gita. It was at this period that he also read a translation of the Koran. But on the whole he is less acquainted with the

philosophy of Islam than he is with the philosophy of other religions. His liking for the Muslims—there is no shadow of a doubt that he has it—is due, in the opinion of the writer, to personal contacts, and to sympathy with their clear-cutness of mind, with the Islamic principles of bringing the Truth about God near to the lives of the masses. Though the Muslim is not more truthful than the Hindu in the ordinary sense, he hates ambiguity and vagueness, and there is definitely a directness and simplicity about his outlook on life. All these affinities of temperament Mahatma Gandhi must have felt, though no one can tell how much of it is conscious.

Mahatma Gandhi's studies in England and the convictions he arrived at were directed towards self-realization: and they remained in the domain of diet and religion. His economic, social, and political outlook was still that of a conformist. He was a lawyer who meant to earn a living by his profession in the society in which he was destined to live. The difference between him and an ordinary lawyer was that he had a deeper and richer inner life, and believed that honesty could be applied with profit to every action, even to the exercise of the law. That he became a brilliant lawyer and succeeded in spite of, or because of this honesty, belongs to a later stage in his life: every lawyer could benefit by a study of Mahatma Gandhi's professional career. But at this stage, that is, when he returned to India after completing his studies, he failed in his profession. This was due to his timidity which disabled him from speaking in public, as well as to his refusal to conform to the tricks and subterfuges of the profession. He was seized by a deep disgust with the intrigues and the petty spirit which was prevalent among lawyers. So, when he was offered a job by a Muslim firm in South Africa, he accepted it. He was twenty-four.

The third stage in the formative process of Mahatma Gandhi's life is in South Africa.

It was in South Africa that Mahatma Gandhi changed from a conformist to a nonconformist who had the mission of altering the society he belonged to. The reformers in general use all ways and means, he put as much *importance on ways and means as on his objective*. His methods were to be pacific.

Hence, parallel to the inner process of self-realization, a new process, that of changing the Indian people, and then of creating more egalitarian relations with the outside world, especially with Great Britain, began.

There are those who still believe that Mahatma Gandhi's social activities are but further attempts at self-realization. They believe Mahatma Gandhi to be above all an individualist, and that whatever he has done and may do to serve India or mankind is a means to reach self-perfection. Those who think this can find enough data in Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography to prove their point.

There are also those who believe that the Mahatma's process of self-realization was only a preparation to fit him for service, and that, though that process continues, it is due to a belief that a teacher must practise what he teaches. These can find even more data in Mahatma Gandhi's writings and life to prove their point. The writer belongs to this second category. The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi's life is illustrated by his favourite passage from Hindu scriptures, which is read out to him every morning at prayers: "I crave not for Power, I crave not for Heaven, nor do I crave for freedom from Birth (rebirth), I crave *for the release from suffering of all afflicted Creation.*"

So Heaven and self-perfection, which for the Hindu mean release from rebirth, are secondary. It is love and pity for



mankind which govern Mahatma Gandhi's actions. Whatever the price, he must go on trying to alleviate the suffering of all afflicted Creation.

The only point which can be discussed—at least for the writer—is the extent of what Mahatma Gandhi calls the “afflicted Creation.” Do the Hindu, the non-Hindu, and the world outside share his love in equal measures?

The Western reader may well ask: “Does it matter whether a man serves his fellow-beings for the sake of salvation or for love, as long as he desires to bring about happier conditions?” But to the Eastern it is a most important distinction. For the seeker after a personal Heaven may, and indeed, often has, used a different means to attain his salvation. He may suddenly decide that his salvation depends on standing on a pillar for some twenty years on one foot. In that case whatever self-satisfaction he may get out of that uncomfortable position, he is nothing but a spiritual acrobat. He is spectacular, but not only is he useless, but also a hindrance to normal social evolution. He has put *self* before the welfare of his kind. The antagonism, even hatred for religion as being a handicap to the happiness of mankind which is found among a certain section of Eastern youth to-day, is due to such negative religious phenomena. It would be perilous for India if Mahatma Gandhi's mission in life were nothing but a means of self-realization. For generations and generations the normal and happy evolution of the East will depend on active and *selfless* religion; that is, if religion is to remain.<sup>1</sup>

What caused Mahatma Gandhi to change his direction in

<sup>1</sup> The writer once asked a Persian student in Paris why he hated the monumental mystical and religious literature of his country. He answered: “It has led us to inaction and to far too much individualism. I think it is responsible for our subjection to the West. We will be better without it for another thousand years.

South Africa is worthy of attention. At that distance from his country he saw a miniature India before him. Its grievances and its shortcomings stood out as if placed under a magnifying glass. They could no longer be ignored, or accepted as the natural order.

On the table of India's wrongs and grievances were written subjection, exploitation, and ignoble treatment as a lower race by the West. On the table of its shortcomings were written inaction, inefficiency, and internal social disorder. Its wrongs and shortcomings were, in his mind, dependent upon each other. Unless India changed from within, it could not ask for better treatment from without. He wasted energy neither on bitterness nor on self-depreciation, both being *forms of negative revolt which often characterizes dissatisfied Indians*.

It is interesting to note that Mahatma Gandhi must have seen in India the ruling race travelling in separate compartments, where no native was allowed. Its significance dawned on him when he himself was thrown out of a first-class carriage, though he was a well-known and respected lawyer. He must have seen that in India there was a section of Indians who were considered unworthy to use the public roads; he realized the tragedy of this when he saw that no Indian was allowed to use the pavements in South Africa. The high-class Indian had taken this degrading treatment as natural in India; for he himself treated a section of his own people in the same way. The foreign rulers were one degree higher in the social scale, that was all. But in South Africa all Indians were equally low down. Hence his realization of the Oneness of India, and his understanding that all governments, foreign or native, take a people at their own valuation. The man who asks for equality must not only be worthy of it, but must also believe in equality for all. That the key of

the Indian tragedy lay in Hindu mentality, and that Indians were being done to as they did to others, he expresses in the following lines:

“The ancient Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people of God to the exclusion of all others, with the result that their descendants were visited with a strange, even unjust retribution. Almost in a similar way the Hindus have considered themselves Aryas or civilized, and a section of their kith and kin as Anaryas, or Untouchables, with the result that a strange if unjust nemesis is being visited not only upon the Hindus in South Africa, but the Mussulmans and Parsees as well, inasmuch as they belong to the same country and have the same colour as their Hindu brethren.”

That is only the moral aspect. The material aspect he realized with even greater clarity. His plan of action was:

(i) To create an Indian Congress in South Africa, a representative and executive body in which the lowest and the highest could work on equal terms; (ii) To found a Press which would present their wrongs and demands; (iii) To establish a centre (Ashram) where individuals would be trained in the new ideals; (iv) To employ the method of passive resistance and non-co-operation if the masses failed to get redress through the Press and the law.

The South African activities of Mahatma Gandhi could be called a dress rehearsal for the greater drama which was acted, together with the whole of India, much later. As far as self-realization went, he ceased to be an individual with any rights to a separate existence. He gave up not only the pleasures and even the normal needs of the senses, but he went further and *weaned himself from all bodily desires*. At thirty-six he had taken the vow of celibacy (Brahmacharya). Non-violence had become such a part of his being that he took a public

lynching with sublime courage, and refused to have his assailants prosecuted. His hold over the miniature India in South Africa was so complete that seven thousand of them followed him in passive resistance, and faced prison and punishment, not only with dignity and forbearance, but with joy.

The importance of this first demonstration of passive resistance (Satyagraha) lay in its *proving itself a more efficient method of getting demands* than a bloody revolt, which might have been easily suppressed by an armed government against a disarmed people. Mahatma Gandhi was then convinced of the practical value of Satyagraha for, by an agreement between him and General Smuts, he obtained what the Indian labourers demanded. Also it was for the Indian a test of courage and a test of self-restraint. Although self-restraint is easier for the Hindu than for others, physical courage is not supposed to be natural to him. Mahatma Gandhi, through all his teachings, has rightly believed that what alone can make the Hindu a free man is the removal of fear from his heart. He left South Africa in 1914.

The fourth and the last stage of the process began in India.

Politically Mahatma Gandhi accepted Gokhale's guidance. That is, he was convinced that the British Empire existed for the good of the world, that India on the whole had profited by it, and that India must obtain its independence with the help, consent, and co-operation of the British Empire, though he was by no means blind to its shortcomings.

Mahatma Gandhi promised Gokhale to study India for a year before he would take any action for Hind Swaraj, that is, Indian Home Rule. Though the two men had similar political views with regard to the necessity of not breaking with Great Britain, there was a difference between them. Mahatma Gandhi believed in Hind Swaraj, and Gokhale was

sceptical. "After you have stayed a year in India your views will correct themselves," Gokhale would say. Was this due to a belief in the initial inability of the Indian for self-government, or was it due to a belief that no Empire would give self-government to such a colony as India? It may have been both. Anyhow, Gokhale's view was the liberal, the constitutional, and the moderate politicians' opinion. Such men do not have the courage to support foreign rule openly, nor do they dare visualize India left alone to handle its own destiny. They say that under self-government there might be disruptive revolution, or possibly a much less liberal foreign domination. But Mahatma Gandhi had no such fears.

For a year Mahatma Gandhi travelled and studied India. The practical side of him stands out sharply in the way he gives his attention to every shortcoming of his people, with the intention of removing them by action and example. His interest was largely in the masses. He identified himself more and more with them. Outwardly his dress, that of a poor middle-class Indian, became the semi-nude dress of the poorest. All his habits of life were those of the poorest. Not only did he go on teaching them, but also, with patience and courtesy, withal with firmness and courage, he used every means of persuasion to influence the authorities when there was some injustice or traditional wrong to be removed. He spoke of Satyagraha to the people to convince them that they were not entirely helpless before armed force. The people began to identify themselves with him. He personified their demands. He was the only leader who might eventually lead them to obtain their rights, though they were somewhat vague about these rights. His talk of Satyagraha did not please the authorities. As to how the authorities regarded his references to Satyagraha and how he expressed his belief in it is best expressed

by a quotation from his own autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, vol. ii, pp. 297-8:

"... during my interview with the Bombay Government the Secretary had expressed his disapproval of a reference to Satyagraha in a speech which I delivered in Bagasra (in Kathiawad) and of which he had a report.

" 'Is this not a threat?' he had asked, 'And do you think a powerful Government will yield to threats?'

" 'This was no threat,' I had replied, 'It was educating the people. It is my duty to place before the people all the legitimate remedies for grievances. A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means to freedom. Usually they include violence as the last remedy. Satyagraha on the other hand, is an absolutely non-violent weapon. I regard it as my duty to explain its practice and its limitations. I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy.' "

For Mahatma Gandhi Satyagraha was not only a weapon to be used to obtain self-government from an alien government. It was the method he proposed to the people to replace revolution, whenever they might want a remedy for their wrongs, political or otherwise, against any government, foreign or native.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Late Shervani, the Muslem leader who identified himself with Satyagraha at a later period, and was imprisoned, came to Europe after his release. He came to visit the writer with Dr. Ansari. The gist of what he said to the writer in regard to Satyagraha was this: "Satyagraha will take the place of revolutions in the future. It is essential for India even when she is independent. For in such an event the people will have to face dictatorships, which can be very bad. There is no other weapon for a people suffering from tyranny in modern times. An ordinary revolution can always be suppressed with gas bombs and machine-guns. But when millions refuse to pay taxes, and large enough numbers of the administrative machine refuse to co-operate, it instantly paralyses a government, no matter how strong it may be. Specially

Mahatma Gandhi's belief in Satyagraha was confirmed when he found that he could obtain concession from the British Government during the war years without actually launching a Satyagraha on any considerable scale. This success may have been due to the fact that Great Britain did not want trouble in India at that time, and that Lord Chelmsford was a man with a strong sense of justice and administrative wisdom. But whatever the reason the Indian masses began to have a national pride, self-confidence, and courage to a degree unknown in the past.<sup>1</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi had intimate contact with the peasantry during the years 1916-18. He was asked by the agriculturalists in Champaran to espouse their cause against their landlords. Their grievance was this: the landless tenant was obliged to plant indigo on one acre of land out of every twenty for the benefit of his landlord. Mahatma Gandhi studied the situation on the spot, listened to hundreds of peasants, enlisted Government help with some difficulty for himself, and finally had this grievance removed by a Government decree. Then he began his experiments on educational lines among the peasants of Champaran.

After this a series of Satyagrahas were launched on economic for a country of three hundred million if a few millions are cured from all fear and willing to face death, the most tyrannical government will be helpless. The question is to instil this into the minds of all peoples, and to create the organizations necessary to start it."

<sup>1</sup> The writer met a Parsee woman of high intelligence whose husband had been a tax collector for twenty years and whom she had always accompanied on his tours through the rural districts. Now her son had taken the job of the father and she accompanied him. She said: "You cannot imagine the change which has taken place in the peasant since M. Gandhi has begun his campaign. In my husband's time we could ask the peasant to do anything for us. The word of the official was law. Now beyond the work required of him he refuses to give service and stands up and protests strongly when he is asked to do extras. We have to pay for every service asked in the rural districts, which was an unheard-of thing in the past."

and other issues, with partial or complete success. But it was evident that he meant to take no advantage of his position, and cherished above all the desire to obtain self-government by the consent and the co-operation of Great Britain. For this purpose he made an unbelievable compromise with his essential principle of Ahimsa. He consented to attend the war conference at Delhi, and on the demand of the British Government, undertook a recruiting campaign for the British Army. He used to issue leaflets asking people to enlist as recruits. As the writer does not possess a leaflet she does not know all the arguments used by Mahatma Gandhi to explain his reasons, but he gives one of them in his autobiography<sup>1</sup> which we will quote here:

“Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the act of depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest. If we want the Arms Act to be repealed, if we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity. If the middle classes render voluntary help to Government in the hour of its trial, distrust will disappear, and the ban on possessing arms will be withdrawn.”

As to how the recruiting campaign was received it is best to give it in the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

“Whereas during the campaign the people readily offered their carts free of charge, and two volunteers came forth when one was needed, it was difficult now to get volunteers. . . .

We had meetings wherever we went. People did attend, but hardly one or two would offer themselves as recruits. ‘You are a votary of Ahimsa, how can you ask us to take up arms?’”<sup>2</sup>

The results of this campaign were very meagre, and he dropped it, partly because he was very ill, and nearly died.

<sup>1</sup> *My Experiments with Truth*, vol. 2, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 455-6.



Any other public leader might after this have lost his hold on the masses but not he. When he called on them for another Satyagraha against the Government, specially on the passing of the Rowlatt Bill, not only the masses but even the most moderate liberals followed him.

In 1919 the Rowlatt Bill was passed as valid for three years; and made provision for arresting and imprisoning without the formalities of the law. A wave of indignation swept over India. Mahatma Gandhi formed his Satyagraha Sabha, and those who joined took pledges to defy the Rowlatt Bill, if it was applied to them, as well as other objectionable laws to be specified from time to time. This meant that Indians no longer accepted laws which were not based on their consent. The very conception of such a thing showed that there was really something new in India.<sup>1</sup>

The history of Satyagraha is connected with too much tragedy and too long to be recorded here. Nevertheless it may be of some interest to give a description of one of them as told by Kamala-Devi Chattopodhyaya, a prominent figure and worker among the Hindu Socialists and Nationalists. She was sentenced to a longish term of imprisonment, which included a term of solitary confinement as well. But what she describes here is more the way the women and youth of India took part in a Satyagraha. It was in 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi was trying to break the salt law by a Satyagraha.

"When Mahatma Gandhi decided to break the salt law by which the poor man's salt was taxed, it seemed the most natural thing for us to follow his path and plunge into the

<sup>1</sup> Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated this Satyagraha by a general hartal (fasting and praying, and the suspension of all business). Three hundred millions fasted and prayed and suspended business for a day. Mahatma Gandhi describes it in his autobiography in the chapter entitled, "That Wonderful Spectacle," *My Experiments with Truth*, vol. 2, pp. 481-7.

movement. Particularly for us women it was our golden morn of glory. In one instant age-old walls seemed to crumble under some magic touch, chains of tradition broke, veils of old usages were torn and women came out of their century-old seclusion into the wide glare of the battlefield as radiant soldiers in the cause of freedom. It was a great revelation for all of us who were at the time working amidst the women, and chafing at their slowness. This rise of women to heroic heights I put down as the most striking feature of the Civil Disobedience movement and my happiest association in it.

“Within a few days of the starting of the campaign it had become a mass movement. Hundreds and thousands of men, women, and youngsters were seen taking water from the sea and extracting salt out of it. One saw lines of women wending their way home from the sea, carrying on their heads pots filled with salt water, singing gaily as they went, as though it was some festive occasion. There was hardly a home in the city of Bombay where salt was not being made. The air was rent with the jubilant cries of, ‘We have broken the salt law.’ We had got salt-pans erected on the roof of the Congress Office. But they were soon destroyed by the police. Each time they were re-erected the iron hand was there to smash it. We used to try to resist it by forming cordons round the pans, and it proved no easy matter for the police to break through these cordons.

“I shall never forget my first experience of an ugly scene. Suddenly amidst the dull thuds of the baton charges came a shriek close into my ear, ‘Mother, they are beating me,’ and when I turned round it was to find a young boy about fourteen who was standing by and watching, dropped down with his head smashed. The cry haunted me and the memory of the broken head made me violently sick for days. I was yet raw

to these horrors which soon became our daily existence. Then Mahatma Gandhi had asked us women not to be in these cordons and resist the police charging. But later, when the movement grew fiercer, all such niceties were dropped and women were in the thick of the fight. It was the women who mostly led the processions, and when they were not charged they were merely stopped from proceeding. Then the processions merely squatted down on the roadside and one witnessed the strange spectacle of thousands sitting along the highway for hours, once all through the night into another day. Women even with babies in their arms sat determined and indomitable. No police force, not even the military, could drive them home. Hoisting of the National Flag was also banned. But the hoisting was done regularly. Not infrequently it was the women, young girls, old women, who did the hoisting and struggled to keep it flying until they were beaten to the ground by the police.

"We used to take small packets of the salt we prepared each day and go round selling them. They were tiny packets containing only a few pinches of salt. There was no man who did not produce some coin from his pocket and reverently take the salt packet, often touching his forehead with it as a mark of respect. Thus from the smallest coin which the poorest beggar gave to the thousands from the rich merchants, the salt sales ranged as they went forward.

"One striking feature of this time was the rise of the children's movement. Boys and girls ranging between ten and sixteen banded themselves into an organization called the 'Vanar Sena' (the Monkey Army). Instead of all the enthusiasm roused in them being frittered into aimless street wandering and street shouting, some of us encouraged them into forming themselves into a disciplined organization so that

the movement, while benefiting by their participation, would put the least strain on their normal life, particularly the studies. These children played no mean part in the campaign. They added to the demonstrative side of the movement and they brought into the movement their parents as well.

"One day three of us women quietly drove up to the High Court and before anyone could realize what was happening, we were in the Bar Room and were making those sleek and polished interpreters and upholders of the law willing and smiling partners in the lawless transaction of buying 'illicit' salt. Crisp notes changed hands and silver coins slipped into our purses. The secretary of the Bar Association who felt the occasion called forth some action from him protested in a feeble voice: 'You cannot come in here without permission.' 'Permission,' I gaily replied, 'do you expect us to bother about permission when we are out to break laws?'

"Women's chief domain was picketing of foreign cloth shops which was later extended to British goods. . . . Picketing, too, was banned, just as the Congress organization, women's associations, student, volunteer and youth leagues were banned. Each day the police van collected scores of women from the city. Later the numbers swelled to such proportions that the authorities found it impossible to cope with them, for even the opening of new prisons and detention camps could not meet the requirement. So the women had the disconcerting experience of being carried away in the police vans only to be set down in some out-of-the-way place at the end of the day and left to find their way home. . . .

"Thus moved on from scene to scene, from battle to battle, some of us found refuge earlier than others behind prison bars, but though physically removed we never felt out of it. . . ."

Indian history since Satyagraha days has entered a new phase; the salient points are:

(i) The Congress became a more representative body, and its members were forced to consider the problems which touch mass life, economic or otherwise.

(ii) There is a profound change in the relations of Great Britain with India. Unsatisfactory as it might seem to Indian patriots, there was still a Constitution, but there was also a new belief on the British side that the Indian people must be consulted, and their consent, though partial, obtained.

Mahatma Gandhi suspended Satyagraha finally in 1934. It was then called Civil Disobedience. For any peaceful resistance to the State, whether called Non-Co-operation or Civil Disobedience, is Satyagraha. There has been great tragedy and suffering in connection with Satyagraha in India, there also have been bloodshed and violent outbreaks. But the final suspension is not connected with any general outbreak or violence. The reason given by him and his followers is due to much deeper causes. It was evident that the people were getting tired and disorganized and even the best among his followers did not seem to be living up to the principles of truth and non-violence, as he interpreted them. He believed that a people not trained in complete self-restraint and fearlessness cannot carry out Satyagraha. Therefore there must be a long period of training of the masses.

“Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the State laws. . . . A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws scrupulously that he is in a

position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just, and which unjust and iniquitous.”<sup>1</sup>

Although these words were written at an earlier date, it is evident that he had come to realize that years of training in Satyagraha had not fitted the Indian people for Satyagraha as he understood it. Although general opinion agrees that the Indians were tired and disorganized and no longer as enthusiastic over Satyagraha as they used to be, still, the suspension in 1934 has led to a great deal of criticism among different sects of Indians. The writer has listened to a great deal of it while in India. Their only importance lies in the fact that they throw considerable light on the Indian situation as well as on Indian mentality.

On the Hindu side Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appears among the serious critics. Although he thinks Mahatma Gandhi was right in suspending Satyagraha, he deems the reasons metaphysical and mystical.<sup>2</sup> The harshest critics of Mahatma Gandhi are the Communists. They say: “He saw that civil disobedience was leading to a break with England. He suspended it because he is on the side of the capitalist class which is the instrument of Great Britain.”

Others, such as the youth who had staked their lives and their future on Satyagraha and are now in a confused and disillusioned state, say:

“We would have brought Great Britain to terms, and obtained self-government, if Satyagraha had not been suspended.”

The Hindu Communalists, the writer was told, were on the whole in favour of the suspension. Partly some of them belong to the capitalist class and some believe that if Satyagraha

<sup>1</sup> *My Experiments with Truth*, vol 2, pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Jawaharlal Nehru: an autobiography*, p. 506.

had succeeded at that time to force the hand of Great Britain to give self-government to India, it might have brought about a Muslem domination, as the Hindus were not yet ready for it.

Muslems, when they are against the suspension, are more bitter than the Hindus, for they declare that they were the greater sufferers from it. They also believe, rightly or wrongly, that if the struggle had continued and triumphed the Muslems would have been in a dominating position in India. But the ordinary Indian of all sects has the same argument in favour of the suspension:

"It was ruining business and would have led us to a class war if it had succeeded. On the other hand, it was getting so weak that Mahatma Gandhi had to suspend it to save the face of the Indian nation."

Except the assumption that Mahatma Gandhi is the instrument of the capitalist, which is entirely false, the rest might contain a grain of truth. However, all these criticisms are symptomatic of the mentality of a nation divided within itself, and not at all ready for team work in any national sense.

With or without Satyagraha Mahatma Gandhi dominated the Congress. And his greatest contribution to it was to bring other problems besides the political to its notice. Though he failed to bring about complete unity between the Muslem and the Hindu, he managed to bring new purpose into every group: that of taking up the problems which touch the lives of the *masses by their respective communities*. The Congress became conscious that a member must be representative of some mass problem.

In 1934 Mahatma Gandhi retired from active politics, and devoted his energies to educating the masses, especially the peasantry.

## CHAPTER XX

### Mahatma Gandhi at Home

As an eyewitness to the manner in which Mahatma Gandhi lives and carries on his activities, the writer proposes to give a picture of his life, as she saw it in 1935.

Let us begin the day:

It is four o'clock at Wardha.<sup>1</sup> Blackness is thinning away, and stars are pale. The scene is in a quadrangular house on a courtyard in the middle of a huge garden. Electric lights are on in some of the rooms, which open on to colonnaded porches. Towards one of them figures in white are hastening.

The room is the replica of one already described in connection with Delhi. Men and women are sitting on the floor with their hands on their knees and their heads piously bent. Mahatma Gandhi is among them, but one is conscious of the assembly itself, and not of any separate personality. The lights are switched off.

In the middle of the room is an ancient low table with three legs. On it is an ancient oil candle in earthenware. No wick. The oil burns like a continuous liquid flame. Behind it, the imposing bust of a woman. In the frame of the white head-veil the face is that of a nun of the austerest expression. It is Sister Miraben. She officiates. Hers is the only countenance which reflects the liquid flame; the rest are dim outlines.

<sup>1</sup> Wardha was Mahatma Gandhi's headquarters in 1935. At present he is living in one of the small villages near it. The writer omitted the description of her personal visit to Wardha in the "Highways and Byways," because she wanted to present Mahatma Gandhi's daily life from an impersonal angle, keeping herself out of the picture.



The atmosphere is as intense as Sister Miraben's dark drawn face. Very different from that of the prayer meeting at Delhi. Whereas there was an absolute soul-expansion then, here is an almost awesome inner contraction. One could compare the congregation to champions contracting their muscles to make an inconceivably high leap.

The lovely contralto of Sister Miraben chants a whole chapter of Hindu scriptures in Sanscrit. There are passages when the voices of the assembly join in, the collective chanting giving the impression of a subterranean, even sepulchral, hum. The frequent "ummmmmmmmm" of the Sanscrit lengthens into a continuous echo.

This daily ritual is for self-purification before the service of the day. Hence the intensity and tautness during the morning prayers, and the soul expansion and joy of the evening prayers, which mark the end of a term of service.

The voice is low, steady, and chants ceaselessly the strange words of Sanscrit; but the tone is that of wonder, the wonder of the first being who has found his relation to something beyond the flesh and blood, beyond bodily senses.

Translation: "At Dawn I remember Him, the Essence of Atman throbbing in my heart. Knowledge, Truth, Bliss, the goal for which Sages strive, for he protects us whilst asleep, awake, adream. For I am that phaseless one, not the mass of elements."

"At Dawn I bow to Him, the Sun beyond all darkness, the Perfect, the Eternal, the Supreme Being in whom this Universe is reflected as the snake in a coiled spring."

"At Dawn I worship Him—beyond the reach of thought and speech, yet Whose grace lends meaning to all speech, Whom the scriptures describe as not That, not That. He

is the Lord of Lords, the Unborn,<sup>1</sup> the Changeless, the Primeval."<sup>1</sup>

"We think of Thee, we worship Thee, we bow to Thee, the witness of the Universe, the only Receptacle of Truth, the Independent Lord, we seek refuge in Thee—The Boat which carries across the Ocean of the world."

"Thou art the only Refuge, only God, the Changeless and the Protector, Self-Effulgent, the only Creator, the Protector and Destroyer; the Inalterable and Motionless!"

"The Fear of all fears, the Fear from which all other fears flee, the Purifier of all things which purify."

These incomparable verses contain nothing but a realization of a Being beyond word and thought. In them all, the conception of God at its highest is felt, regardless of the name of religion. But there are other verses where one sees the beginning of symbolism, the representation of the One inconceivable Spirit in things visible. That is purely Hindu. The prayer to the Elephant-God begins:

Crooked-faced, big-bodied, Lustrous like a million suns.

To the mother earth the approach is thus:

Ocean-clad, Mountain-breasted. . . .

Hence the pure idea of One Creative Spirit is getting adulterated by sensations which one feels through the senses. Benares is creeping in. The mixture is typical of Hinduism, the amorphous force which combines the highest abstract thought with the earthly and humble ideas derived through familiar sensations.

<sup>1</sup> There is an Arabic verse in Muslem religious writings which expresses this same thought: "Kulla-ma-hatara bi-balik; Fallahu-siva-Zalik," meaning, "Whatever comes into your mind as God, He is other than That." Also the Koranic verse: "Allahussamat, Lem-yelid, ve-lem-yuled," meaning, "Allah is He on Whom all depend; One who is not begotten, nor does He beget."

At the end the collective hum becomes grim, intense; and words come out separately, almost hoarsely. They are repeating the eleven vows renewed every morning.

(1) Ahimsa, (2) Satyam, (3) Asteya, (4) Brahmacharya, (5) Asamgraha, (6) Shareershrama, (7) Asvada, (8) Sarvatrabhaya-varjana, (9) Sarvadharmisamanatva, (10) Swadeshi, (11) Sparshabhavana. Hi ekdasha Sevavi Namratwe Vratnishchaye.

Translation: (1) Non-violence, (2) Truth, (3) Non-stealing, (4) Celibacy, (5) Non-possession, (6) Body-Labour, (7) Control-of-the-palate, (8) Fearlessness, (9) Equal-respect-for-all-Religions, (10) Swadeshi (Nation-made goods), (11) Freedom-from-Untouchability. These eleven should be observed in a spirit of humility as vows.

At eight o'clock in the morning there is feverish activity in the sun-bathed courtyard. A group of men have assembled there with shovels and spades on their shoulders, some carrying a bucket in the hand. They walk out through the arched gate into the open; they are going to begin a sanitation or scavenging campaign in Wardha villages. A brief explanation is necessary for the Western reader here. As has been already mentioned, in backward Eastern villages in general, and in all Indian villages in particular, there are no latrines in the huts. Men and women go out into the fields to perform their functions. Any morning on an Indian common, or in an unused field or in lanes, one can see bunches of people sitting here and there, performing their functions. Women may rise and wait if they see a passer-by, men seem to feel no shame. The filth in these places is indescribable, the stink sickening, and the flies rising from the excreta heaps are carriers of all manner of disease germs. Centuries of habit made all this seem natural to villagers. The British rulers might have enforced the use of latrines, but they either have not or could

not. The landlords have their own latrines, but they never dream of teaching the people anything outside tradition and usage. Mahatma Gandhi, besides many other simple sanitation rules, launched in person a scavenging campaign in 1935. It was the only way to make the villagers get interested and to co-operate. This campaign, besides sanitation, had also a utilitarian aim. Here are some of its leading features:

(i) To cover the excreta with earth, gather it into mounds, and use it for field or garden manure. (ii) To select two different spots, for men and for women. To dig big trenches six inches wide and a foot deep, with open spaces between on which the dug-out earth should be banked to cover the excreta in the ditches. This operation must be renewed weekly, as the selected spot is used up in that part. (iii) To build public latrines, or help villagers to build latrines in their huts.

From the middle of March 1935 the campaign went on for months. Every morning the villagers saw a handful of Mahatma Gandhi's followers cleaning the filth of the people by the roadside, on the fields; opening ditches, talking to villagers individually and collectively, gaining them for the campaign. His weekly paper, *Harijan*, published articles by him or by other workers telling of the progress of the campaign, giving simple, practical, but scientific advice. It became a village-wide activity. It brought about a comparative cleanliness and decency; it has been an unforgettable object lesson for the *sanctity of labour*, and the campaign still goes on.

Ten o'clock in the morning. The first meal. The courtyard is drenched in the white light of the tropical sun. On the left side of the colonnaded porch mats are spread. All the inmates

of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram sit in rows, there are women and babies as well, a copper tray before each grown-up. Two members of the household pass with large pots in hand and distribute food and chapati (bread). The food is composed of unpolished rice and vegetables and fruit. There is an instant of silence, then the voices break into a chorus:

"Om Saha na vavatu; Saha bhunaktu; Saha Viryam Karavavahai, Tejaswinavadheetemastu, ma vidvishavad. Om, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih!"

Translation: "May He protect us; may we enjoy together; may we grow together into strength; let our studies be fruitful of peace and light, let us not hate each other. Peace, Peace, Peace!"

Good cheer and fraternity. They enjoy their food for they have earned it by bodily labour. They talk freely, Mahatma Gandhi jokes with them all, especially with the little boy nearest to him. They clear the table and they retire for a short rest; for each of them has been working since four o'clock in the morning.

The visitor may now inspect the house. Mahatma Gandhi's room, in addition to its likeness to the room at Delhi, has hand-spinning or weaving machines, devised by simple mechanics, and brought to him for trial. Though he is against an absolute mechanization, he welcomes simple machinery which eases the work without affecting the creative instincts of the worker.

Sister Kasturbai's room is next. She is in it, or on the porch cleaning rice or wheat before she goes to the kitchen to prepare the evening meal. Opposite are two rooms. From the small one the click of a typewriter is constantly heard. It

belongs to Brother Mahadev. The bigger room is a kind of museum for old village handicraft. It also serves as a guest-room, that is, if the guest is too spoilt by civilization to sleep in the open, and in company. The household sleep on the roof, women on one side, men on the other.

Round the house are water arrangements where women wash; and bathrooms and other conveniences. There is a vegetable garden and orchard, and no end of lovely flowers with delicate smells peculiar to the Wardha climate. The place had once belonged to a millionaire who had evidently used it as an abode of pleasure. Gay and wicked-looking nymphs in marble grin at the toiling women from their high pedestals, or at Sister Miraben milking the goat—a vicious creature, which gives no end of trouble before it allows itself to be milked.

About two miles away are the institutions connected with Mahatma Gandhi's activities. First the women's Ashram. Instructors and students are from among the daughters of the rich or the poor, or widows who have dedicated their lives to the service of India. There is not a thing of use to the villager in which they do not receive instruction. They have all taken the vows.

The women live in immaculate cells in twos or threes. There are mats to sit on, and thin mattresses to sleep on. Just enough clothes to change. There is not a single article which has not been made by their own hands. Neither is the education and training only on the utilitarian side. One may hear them any time taking their music lessons in some gloomy barn, playing on their instruments or singing. Visitors who speak English are asked to speak to them. Mahatma Gandhi himself gives them useful talks.

Then there is the boys' Ashram. One may see them in their

classrooms or workshops. Everything that can be done with cotton they know. Not a thing is wasted. There is tanning, shoemaking, carpentering, etc. If what they produce is not always for the market, it is for home use. They are being trained to bring the life of the peasant to its minimum level of civilization within their own meagre means. These institutions are mostly in the vicinity of Harijan villages. Neat little huts with trellis in the front, men cutting wood, women pottering about within the huts. During these visits Brother Mahadev will be telling one about the simple knowledge and practice offered to the student. They will all live their lives in villages, tending the sick, teaching, cleaning, regulating diet, and sharing the daily life of the villager within its humble possibilities.

Who finances all these? Jamnalal Bajaj, a sturdy figure of six feet, a pleasant, dark face, friendly eyes, and the whitest of teeth which constantly flash, for he is a jolly good fellow.

He was the adopted son of an old Hindu millionaire who owned these establishments. The old man had no son, so adopted a poor boy. Women may not inherit according to the old Hindu laws, and they are no asset to their parents on the road to heaven. So Jamnalal Bajaj from the poorest surroundings leaped into the shoes of a plutocrat. But he considers himself as a trustee of this wealth, rather than its owner; and he is using it for the benefit of the class to which he once belonged. All these establishments are schools, guest houses, or workshops. He makes no difference between the Muslem and the Hindu. When the writer inaugurated the laying of the foundation of the New Buildings of Jamia, she saw his name at the top of the list of donors. He is the friend of all the servants of India, regardless of faith or race.

His house is on the road leading to the Ashrams. One may

visit his house and take lunch. One invariably meets outstanding figures of the Indian scene lunching with him in the same simple way one sees at Mahatma Gandhi's place. Between the life of Jammalal Bajaj and an average villager the difference is not very great. One of the daughters is an inmate of Mahatma Gandhi's household. A slim figure in short trousers and rough cotton chemise, with bare feet and short-cropped bare head. One takes her for a boy at once. She has taken all the vows, though she is not twenty yet. One is not surprised, for the passion and the determination of her disturbing black eyes and clear-cut features make one think of her as a totally mature person.

Lower down on the main road is a Temple open to Harijans, this being a supreme example of caste barriers being broken. There are also other establishments such as depots for hand-made goods, guest-houses, etc. Peasants, strolling players with their quaint posters, carts, and women in purple skirts, red or yellow bodices, coloured head veils, and copper bracelets or anklets jingling as they walk with some jug or basket on their heads, travel on the same road. One may see these women at work in their tiny wayside farms, turning a hand-mill and singing, the whirr of the wheel, the flash of colours as they bend and rise, their voices at tune with it all. . . . If Mahatma Gandhi is passing, he will stop and look at them and say with infinite pride and affection: "Ah, that is how I want to see them all." Well may he be proud of what he has achieved; for though he has only inherited the torch which has been lighting the way of Neo-Hinduism, he is the first one who has carried it to the village hearth.

Back at Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram. Everyone is up and doing. He himself is at his daily spinning, receiving and talking all the while with his guests. Some have come in



Rolls-Royces, some in carts, and many on foot. No difference between the poor who are his own people, and the rich who are human beings with their own particular burdens and problems. He will make use of them all. Although one may liken his communal life to that of the early Christians, there is none of the anti-Pharisaic attitude, no class-superiority or inferiority complex. It gives him a sane and comprehensive outlook of Indian or world problems. He is ever trying to make the rich give away their fortunes, but not in alms. His idea of the trusteeship of the rich is the main line of his teaching. He says, "No reform is possible unless some of the educated and the rich voluntarily accept the status of the poor."

Though the writer has met no one who knows the limitations of book education and the vanity of wealth as well as Mahatma Gandhi, yet he does not under-estimate their use, and employs them when and where it is necessary.

At five, the second and the last meal. The same scene. Only the light is richer, warmer. "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih!" The cry for peace once more echoes against the walls of the four-sided house.

At seven Mahatma Gandhi may walk up to one of the Ashrams for the evening prayers. Half-way on the road the youth will run down to greet him, and to help him climb the hill. Or the prayers may take place on his own roof. It is a rectangular brick-coloured, sun-scorched place. Purple, red, crimson shadows are settling on the sombre green foliage round Wardha. By some curious natural coincidence there are three stars in the flushed and gilded firmament above, in the form of a perfect triangle. The scene is intensely Hindu in spite of the presence of foreign guests. The prayers are the same as recorded at Delhi.

As one goes down from the roof one says: "They are enjoying together, growing in strength together. Will this new force in the world be fruitful of Light and Peace such as they pray for?"

If a visitor returns from a visit to the village after the evening prayers he may hear a flute played from the roof. Pastoral and poignant are the notes which fall one by one into the hushed and flushed night. It is Sister Miraben.

The same visitor sleeping in the museum-room may be awakened about half-past ten at night by the sound of drums, feet, and singing. He may see the reflection of the torches of a village procession lighting his room by fits and starts, as the torch-bearers pass by.

Another day begins. The same spectacle of a people labouring, enjoying, and growing together in strength. . . .



## The Eleven Vows of Mahatma Gandhi

MAHATMA GANDHI'S eleven vows contain the essence of his teaching in its relation to India and represent a trend in the writings of the world-intelligentia, and the secret longings of a large number of inarticulate human beings.

Superficially viewed, most of these vows derive from the teachings of any and every saint in the East. Such a saint in the past may have been a fine sight, but he was often anti-social. Society, however, is not a disembodied institution, and civilization is composed of material desires and needs as well as spiritual. But the old-fashioned saint usually destroyed the balance in favour of the spirit just as the extreme materialist destroys in favour of matter.

But Mahatma Gandhi did not seem—to the writer—merely a man who is out to establish a spiritual Utopia. With, and in spite of, the seemingly difficult vows, he appeared to be out to create a workable Hindu society. The moment one tried to analyse these vows in their relation to the Hindu, one came face to face with their several aspects.

Let us review them and try to find out their practical implications, as Mahatma Gandhi understands them.

1. Control of the palate is no longer a religious practice. It is directed towards health and good behaviour. Its first origin may be the Hindu adage: as a man eats so he becomes. But it is a scientific experiment now, and Mahatma Gandhi makes use of all Western data available.

Celibacy is not for everyone. But those who have undertaken to rebuild Hindu society must have no personal lusts.

Its application to the people is based on self-restraint and birth-control. Carnal relations of the sexes are restricted to the purpose of reproduction. As sexual life begins early among the Hindus, Mahatma Gandhi knows by experience the degenerating effect of sexual indulgence. Restraint, which may bring about harmful inhibitions, is preferable to indulgence in the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi.

*Non-stealing* is not merely a ban on stealing. It is out to bar exploitation which, in Mahatma Gandhi's opinion, is incredibly prevalent in Hindu society. The subtlest manifestation and remedy of Hinduism both for and against exploitation comes out in the vow of Non-possession. As Mahatma Gandhi accepts and respects property rights, this vow may seem somewhat a contradiction at first. But for him it is not. The good things of the earth he believes to be the common heritage of humanity. Only some are abler to extract them out of raw materials, and some are more intelligent in the use of human labour. In 1935 Mahatma Gandhi respected those who were able to create wealth. But he also interpreted ownership by trusteeship. The rich were the trustees, and they ~~could~~ use their wealth for the benefit of all; that is, for the use of those who are joint and original owners. For the writer, the inclusion of Non-possession had another significance. It looked as if Hinduism was *inoculating* itself with a germ of a disruptive force for the sake of immunization. And that force is Communism. It received a seat in the Hindu Pantheon of Thought under the name of Non-possession.

Neither is the idea of individual or collective *Non-possession* alien to India. From time immemorial it has been a society composed of collective units in the form of village communities. The writer has already spoken of some of them in connection with the Frontier Provinces. That was among the

Muslims. The Hindus themselves had also those collective and separate units.

Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which continued down to this day, are based on possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is started, as a plan and scheme ready cut and dried. Occupying areas of from 100 up to several thousand acres, each forms a compact whole producing all it requires. The chief part of the products is destined for *direct use of the community* itself, and does not take *the form of a commodity*. Hence, production here is independent of that division of labour brought about, in Indian society, as a whole, by means of exchange commodities. It is the surplus alone that becomes a commodity, and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of *rent in kind*. The constitution of these communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form, the land is tilled in common, and the produce divided among the members. At the same time spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the "chief inhabitant," who is judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through, and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin who conducts the religious services; the schoolmaster who, on the sand, teaches the children reading and writing; the calendar-Brahmin, or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed times and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery for the village; the village barber, the washerman, who washes clothes,

the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. This dozen of individuals is maintained at the expense of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land. . . . The simplicity of the organization for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic societies, and never ceasing changes of dynasties. The structure of the economical elements of society remains untouched by storm-clouds of the political sky.<sup>1</sup>

The moment the West, with its civilization based on individualism, entered India, the native economic structure went to pieces, and in spite of the benefit it might have heaped on the cities, the 90 per cent of the population which are rural were pauperized. Mahatma Gandhi, who is out to reconstruct the Indian village, finds neither the individualist Western Capitalist pattern, nor the Russian Communist pattern (a Western fabrication also) desirable. But between the two principles, that of individual property rights of the West, and that of non-possession of the Russian communists, the Indian village and the people can accept non-possession more easily, even if it is presented in the form of Trusteeship. But the basis of the village reconstruction as Mahatma Gandhi sees it is to be found in the two other vows: Body-labour and Swadeshi (nation-made goods).

These two vows are due to the influence of *Unto This Last*, by Ruskin. Mahatma Gandhi says: "I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this book of Ruskin,

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 391-4, Kerr edition.

and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life." The principles which he deduces are:

(I) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

(II) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(III) That a life of labour, that is, the life of the tiller of the soil, and the handicraft, is the life worth living.

The first principle is contained in every teaching, religious, moral, even economic. The second seems to the writer as the essence of Islam. Mahatma Gandhi's acceptance of it is against the Hindu system with its hierarchy of workers. It may be one of the unifying influences between Islam and Hinduism. The third has special significance. For the handicraftsman it preserves the creative instinct which is strong in the simple Indian. For the tiller of the soil it keeps him in touch with nature and its laws, of which man himself is only a part. Divorced from the contact with nature, civilization and men are bound to become artificial and unwholesome.

The Indian tiller of the soil, deprived of a market for his hand-made goods, was also deprived of work and livelihood. For he works only a few months on the soil, and it hardly keeps him alive. This point has already been explained earlier. Therefore it was an economic necessity to recreate work of this kind for the Indian peasant. In the first place the peasant could not anyway buy machine-made goods. He must spin and weave to clothe himself, and revive all other subsidiary industries which could raise the level of his existence. As for creating a market, that is, turning hand-made articles into commodities, there was one way: Nation-made goods were to be bought by every Indian who aimed at Independence



in the future. Though both of these expediciencies previously had been talked about, and handcraft revived and boycott of foreign goods started, it was Mahatma Gandhi who made such a nation-wide success of them, by turning them into part of a national and religious creed. And the strongest critics of the movement who see in them an obstacle to industrialization, and consider them as medieval, admit that they have brought about partial economic relief, and are gradually raising the appallingly low standards of living among the peasants.

*Equal respect for all religions.*

This vow has a direct bearing on other non-Hindu communities in general, and on Muslems in particular. The difference between the Muslem and the Hindu is not so much in race, even in culture and language, as in faith, especially in India proper. The claim for equal respect was made in the days of Brahma-Samaj, and Mahatma Gandhi has strengthened it. Although it is as vital a principle with Mahatma Gandhi and his followers as Non-violence and Truth, although it has at many critical moments brought about peace, yet it does not solve the differences between the two communities entirely. The differences must be studied, faced, and removed from other angles.

The principal spoke in the Hindu wheel is Untouchability. Forty millions are outside the pale of Hinduism. The Hindus fear their being converted into Islam easily, for Islam recognizes no caste. Further, they have benefited by British rule, had their legal status equalized and their educational level raised, which may make of them supporters of alien rule.

Mahatma Gandhi's campaign against Untouchability is humanitarian above all. Mahatma Gandhi, in the opinion of the writer, would have been against Untouchability even if

he were not Hindu born. Being a Hindu there is a religious side as well; that is, he declares that the Hindus must do penance for a centuries-old wrong inflicted on their fellow creatures. He declares that Hinduism must go if Untouchability is to stay. This naturally makes a considerable number of conservative Hindu politicians support the movement. There is in the mind of the Hindu still an abnormal fear of a possible Muslem domination, and the unity of the forty million Untouchables with the Hindu community naturally seems one of the guarantees against such a menace. The "penance" idea of Mahatma Gandhi, which makes of the campaign a purely Hindu affair, makes it also exclusive. Hence there is a lot of undesirable sordid discussion between Muslems and Hindus round the anti-Untouchability campaign which must be painful for Mahatma Gandhi himself. The Hindu is always suspecting his Muslem countrymen of a desire to Islamize the Untouchables; the Muslems accuse the Hindus of a narrow religio-racial-nationalism which aims at dominating them in the future. In the opinion of the writer there is exaggeration in the fear-complex on both sides which could be done away with if the anti-Untouchability campaign were made into a nation-wide activity, excluding religion from it altogether. For as long as it is taken on a religious plane the misunderstanding and the conflict will continue.

Studied from the Hindu point of view, this Untouchability campaign has introduced a new conception—Hinduism without a social hierarchy. This is what the eleven vows taken by a selfless Hindu minority have done within Hinduism.

But there is another way in which the vows have a great external significance: that is, with regard to independence and freedom from foreign domination and domestic tyranny. The Hindu who once would have jumped at Dominion

Status would no longer accept it, even if Mahatma Gandhi himself advocated it. In this aspect of the Hindu for freedom the Muslims above all are asked to co-operate; and the means Mahatma Gandhi proposes are the same which have in the past been the cause of the subjection of the Hindu—namely, Non-violence.

“Thus God has laid the foundations of my life in South Africa, and sowed the seed of the fight for national self-respect,” he says.

Satyagraha, the non-violent war of the Hindus, in its aim, procedure, and application has already been explained. As Shervani has said, it is henceforth to be the supreme weapon of defence of the Hindu against not only foreign domination, but against domestic tyranny in the future independent India, which may have once more to face the evil aspects of Asiatic administration. For Mahatma Gandhi has a clear-sighted valuation of the best as well as the worst in Asiatic systems, political or otherwise. Indians must be free, not only from foreign domination, but also from the degrading tyranny of Asiatic despotism. A people who accept it must always be exposed to the menace of foreign occupation; for it weakens man, and makes him lose his self-respect. For such a people, it is easier to accept foreign domination than for a nation whose members are comparatively free. It may be a true saying that as long as the Asiatic peoples bow down to Asiatic forms of despotism, they will not be immune from foreign domination. *No Independence is lasting if there is no inner freedom in a nation.*

In the light of all that has been said with regard to Gandhism, what is the direction or the political form for India towards which Mahatma Gandhi is working?

The main point to remember is that Mahatma Gandhi is

above all concerned with remaking Hindu society internally. He aims at creating a Hindu nation capable of doing teamwork in every national sense. For this it must be unified within. He expects the castes to evolve eventually into classes in the ordinary sense. As to whether he sees this class division in an economic, social, or religious light, there are no definite data. But one is inclined to believe that he thinks of them more as being economic strata. The picture a Hindu intellectual (who is not too modern in ideology) usually has in mind is a kind of guild-socialism, or a socialism based on co-operatives, rather than on state-control. For them—rightly too—it would preserve the liberty of the groups, while a complete state-control would be a further enslavement.

His plea against mechanical industrialism also aims at preserving Hindu society from exploitation by native or foreign capitalists. Further, Mahatma Gandhi believes that absolutely mechanized industrialism would eventually lead the Hindu nation—when it is free—into Imperialism in quest of markets. There has been no escape from it so far for any highly industrialized nation. Hence the effort to produce more for home consumption, rather than for foreign trade. Withal Mahatma Gandhi does not seem to be totally against a certain amount of mechanization, or against a city-limited mechanized industry. He has so far taken a benevolent attitude towards the manufacturer and the millowner. But he would control them and limit their activity to the city.

Those vows of Mahatma Gandhi which are directly related to the trend of thought expressed in the writings of certain world-intelligentzia, and to the longings of a considerable number of inarticulate human beings, are:

(I) *Ahimsa, or Non-Violence.*

Throughout the nineteenth century the scientific phrase,

"the survival of the fittest," used to have a single interpretation in the Western mind. The fittest was the one who was armed and able to fight. Since the Great War, especially after its effects, the "fittest" means the one who is most capable of co-operation with his neighbours. The word co-operation, together with interdependence, the inevitable cause of the first, has come to stay. It is possible to quote infinitely from men of science and thought, and to cite organizations, political or otherwise, which would prove that the latter interpretation is taking root. The quotation which best expresses the force of this new interpretation of survival is from an internationally great scientist:

In the history of the world, the prize has not gone to those species which specialize in methods of violence, or even in defensive armour. In fact, nature began with producing animals encased in hard shells for defence against the ills of life. It also experimented in size. But smaller animals, without external armour, warm-blooded, sensitive, and alert, have cleared these monsters off the face of the Earth. Also, the lions and tigers are not the successful species. There is something in the ready use of force which defeats its own object. *Its main defect is that it bars co-operation.* Every organism requires an environment of friends, partly to shield it from violent changes, and partly to supply it with its wants. The gospel of force is incompatible with social life.<sup>1</sup>

One has to take the armaments of great nations as the hard shells of these prehistoric monsters, necessary for defence against the ills of life. But they will pass away and give place to those nations whose only weapon is their capacity for co-operation. That in spite of the technical superiority for destruction of the greater nations the future is not theirs has become one of the scientific assumptions of the day. So much so that within these very strongly armed nations pacifism is

<sup>1</sup> *Science and the Modern World*, by Whitehead, pp. 257-8.

gaining ground. The question is how to defend one's self, and how to obtain one's rights by pacific means from a neighbour, or from a Government armed to the teeth.

That this point has been considered, and that a new non-violent method with a more pacific procedure is being evolved, is evident. The League of Nations, strikes, blockades, boycotts, are the early signs of Satyagraha in the West. The general strike in England in 1926 was, in the opinion of the writer, an admirably organized and carried-out Western Satyagraha as applied internally to a nation. Its evolution into a more comprehensive non-co-operation of a larger section of a nation would paralyse any Government, and force it to study the just demands of the people. A Government may shoot a few hundreds, but it cannot afford to decimate its own people on whom its own existence and power depend.

Unfortunately the Satyagraha between nations, in spite of the existence of the League of Nations, will take a longer time and needs a more efficient organization. But the realization that war does not pay, the reality of the absolute hold of economic forces on the lives of highly industrialized nations, may eventually lead to a more hopeful organization, and the application of Satyagraha between nations. For the alternative is that of inter-destruction, which means nations being wiped off the face of the earth.

## (II) *Freedom from Untouchability.*

Side by side with the trend of thought which cries out for more and more equal treatment for all men, there is also that which is for suppressing a section of humanity. As none of us are sinless enough to throw a stone at the sinner, it is better not to mention nations or peoples who are doing it; suffice it to say that it is based mostly on colour and race, just as it used to be in ancient India, the home of Untouchability.

Therefore it is good to see *where this mentality has landed Hinduism*, and how Hinduism is struggling to get rid of the canker, which must sooner or later lead to the deterioration of a people. Strangely enough it is not the *oppressed*, but the *oppressor*, who eventually comes to grief. While the Untouchables survived the inhuman treatment they were exposed to, and are now a potential force on which Hinduism is counting for its salvation, the Brahman, the one responsible for Untouchability, is of infinitely less importance. Although Untouchability, like slavery in other ancient civilizations, was considered a necessity, it carried within itself the germs of decay and punishment. Life needs elbow-room to expand and express itself, as much as a certain amount of discipline.

### (III) *Body-Labour.*

As this vow included the anti-machinery part of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings, one could quote from no end of celebrities who share Mahatma Gandhi's feelings. The most recent publication on the subject is that of Dr. Alexis Carrel, a great and internationally respected scientist. In his book called *Man the Unknown* he touches upon this point, and regrets mechanization as not only an obstacle to creativeness of the ordinary man, but also as having a disastrous effect by preventing an all-round development of man. He says:

The worker spends his life repeating the same gesture thousands of times each day. He manufactures only single parts. He never makes the complete object. He is not allowed to use his intelligence. He is the blind horse plodding round and round the whole day long to draw water from a well. Industrialism forbids man the very mental activities which could bring him every day some joy. In sacrificing mind to matter, modern civilization has perpetrated a momentous error.

This citation from Dr. Carrel covers only body-labour in

its relation to handicrafts. The necessity for some body-labour with relation to the earth, that is, the necessity of maintaining the *majority of human beings attached to the land*, is illustrated by the gist of what a Jewish intellectual once said to the writer in New York:

To me anti-Semitism is understandable although I suffer from it. The Jew is not like other men. He has been too long divorced from contact with nature and its laws. This has given him a one-sided view of life, this has made him abnormal, made him get artificial and unreal values. A people divorced from the earth must be ignorant of the essential aspects of life. Until the Jew goes back to the earth he will be a strange, over-speculative, even dangerous human being.

The last thing to be said about Mahatma Gandhi's teachings is that, though derived from ancient times, he has chosen the principles and facts which are the common dilemmas of the world of to-day. Further there is a permanent spirit of trial and error about it. This preserves his experiment from getting too fixed, and allows latitude for his successors to carry on his work unhampered by too much sectarianism. This point he makes clear by repeating often that there is no *finality* in his conclusions. It is this which makes of him a practical leader, and enables him to externalize his visions and concepts, which his critics consider as those of a visionary. "My life, through insistence on truth, has taught me the beauty of compromise," he says. And in this sense Mahatma Gandhi is more like Lenin than any other modern figure, with the only difference that while Lenin used both violent and non-violent methods alike, and while he controlled all the forces of a mighty state to bring about his changes, Mahatma Gandhi has remained within the limits of non-violence, and has had the control of *no Government* force to do his bidding. On the



contrary he has had to lead his people when under persecution, even in jail. Looked at from this point of view, the Hindu leader appears greater and much more historically unique than the Russian leader. The balance remains in favour of the Hindu, even when one considers that the Russian had to make changes far more fundamental than the Hindu; for the means commanded by the Russian were not within the reach of the Hindu.

This is Gandhism in a nutshell as seen by the writer in 1935.

## Jawaharlal Nehru, the Socialist Leader

WE have already spoken of Socialism as a tendency in India even among the Communalists of the most orthodox type. Jawaharlal Nehru differs from them in the sense that the Socialism he has in mind is an exportation. But he differs from the other political leaders of all denominations in a more fundamental way. He unifies all problems in India as being common to all Indians. In his mind there is no Muslem or Hindu or Parsee; every son of India is an Indian.

Jawaharlal Nehru naturally comes into conflict mostly with Hindu Communalists, who are the most organized in India. It is, as we have already mentioned, controlled by the body called the "Hindu Mahasabha." The Socialists who have taken Socialism from Europe and not from their Scriptures, usually call the "Hindu Mahasabha" an instrument of vested interest, that is, a capitalist formation with no definite interest in the masses, or plans for their betterment; an association of job-hunters; the strongest support of foreign domination. There is some truth in those charges; yet if it were nothing else but that, it would not be worth mentioning as one of the forces in Hinduism. It would be blown to pieces of itself just like a card-house. As a matter of fact, it is a structure with deep foundations in the soil. In the first place Communalism still represents the dominant Hindu mentality. In the second place the men of Mahasabha are not all job-hunters; on the contrary, their danger lies in the fact that they are convinced, and within their field they have created admirable educational and economic institutions for the masses. Further, quite a

number of them profess Socialism of a sort, reconciling Communalism with Socialism. All this they derive from ancient Hinduism, and it constitutes an effective prophylactic serum against an imported and classless Socialism.

From the political point of view it is difficult to class them all as supporters of foreign rule. When the Hindu Communalist is surrounded by a Muslem majority, he openly advocates the continuation of foreign rule. But when he is part of a Hindu majority (which is oftener the case) he is a Nationalist. But in his mind India is a Hindu nation. There should be no place for the Muslem in it. He openly declares "No peace so long as there are any Muslems or Christians." His Nationalism is Fascism based on religio-racial foundations. The Muslem expresses this in a nutshell when he talks of a possible Hindu Communalist rule in a future Independent India: "We will be the future Untouchables if they rule."

But this is not by any means the only possible result. The Muslems both in number and virility constitute a body which could not be easily reduced to such a fate. Besides, contradictory as it may sound, there is also a possibility of Hindu and Muslem Communalism making common cause, as both represent vested interest, and both are frightened of any new political creed which may menace their ultra-conservative social forms.

The political creed advanced by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is entirely opposed to all the preceding political creeds. The greatest difference between him and other political leaders among the Hindus is that he aims at changing old Hinduism entirely. Jawaharlal Nehru is descended from a Cashmiri Brahman family which migrated two hundred years ago to the rich plains in quest of fortune. Holding high office under the last Muslem rulers gave them a traditional familiarity

with the Muslem culture and outlook. On the other hand, the family was very early Westernized, and had contact with the English. With occasional setbacks, the Nehru family remained prosperous, highly cultured, and one which was very little hampered by caste traditions and barriers.

Motilal Nehru, the father, was an outstanding personality and a brilliant lawyer. Up to the last few years of his life his politics never took an active form, but whenever he entered the political arena he showed the same backbone and courage as he did in all his legal career. His portrait presents a man of vigour and force, with the clear-cut and domineering mask of a Roman senator. From the writings of his son, one presumes that Motilal Nehru had no inhibitions and metaphysical subtleties, such as possess the average Hindu intellectual.

Jawaharlal Nehru was born in 1889 and was the only son, and the only child up to his twelfth year. This meant a lonely childhood, as his primary education was by private tutors at home. He was sensitive to a degree, and given more to thinking and brooding than to physical activities and games.

He completed his education in Cambridge, which made his Westernization a profounder process than that of an average Hindu boy, as he had not been reared in an over-emphasized Hindu environment. It is probably for this very reason that he could later formulate a political creed which is more on the Western side of ideology than any formulated by Hindu political leaders or reformers. The same influence makes him interpret his political creed without reference to any Hindu scripture. It gives a strange openness and uniqueness to his views, but also an aloofness when judged by the standards of a religion-obsessed Indian mind. He is evidently aware of it, for there is a half-formulated exasperation, if not

actual hostility, against religion. He saw that every barrier to a free and united India was raised in the name of religion; and, as his great ideal is a free India, he could not think of religion in any other way but as one of the principal impediments to freedom. This does not mean that he is a pure rationalist, and devoid of mystical fervour. He seems to realize that to carry the masses one must appeal to their emotions as well as to their interests.

After completing his education in England he returned home and found himself thrown into the political maelstrom. He came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 when Mahatma Gandhi visited Allahabad in connection with Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills. He was an eyewitness to some of the tragic scenes connected with the Satyagraha of that period. From 1920 to 1934 he was seven times in prison. But both his participation in the movement and his contact with India at the intervals of release gave him ample opportunity to study the principal aspects of Indian problems.

This perpetual prison life during the best years of his youth and manhood had a formative effect on his character and mentality. His innate tendency for thought was increased, and he developed an extraordinary capacity for lucid examination of the Indian situation and its bearing on the outside world. His *Glimpses of World History*, two huge volumes, were written in prison, and they contain a painful but honest struggle to find in human history the key to the Indian puzzle. His autobiography, another voluminous work, was also written in prison, and has the same objective scrutiny and analysis both of self and of events. Poignant as it may seem, this superimposed loneliness on an already lonely soul has given him the power to turn to himself for fellowship and guidance,

and arrange his thoughts and evolve his political creed undisturbed by external influences.

"I believe that the whole Indian system must go, root and branch"; that is the essence of his political, social, and economic creed. And that creed is Socialism, a less maximalist form than that of present Russia, but nevertheless based on Marxism.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Nationalism, which exists side by side with his Socialism, is considered by him merely as an expediency to get rid of foreign rule. As a matter of fact it is adopted by Asia in general, where there is foreign domination of any sort. But it also is dominating Japan, for political Nationalism must eventually lead to a Capitalist and Imperialist expansion. Jawaharlal Nehru explains clearly in his writings that he aims at avoiding Nationalism in this sense when India is independent. His ultimate ideal is "Freedom within the framework of International co-operative world federation." Hence he aims at changing India from within. How he proposes to do it is contained in the following:

(i) Communalism must go; (ii) Capitalism must go, both native and foreign; (iii) A complete nationalization, where the state will handle India's resources; (iv) Industrialization on a comprehensive scale must replace the hand-made industry; (v) Economics must replace the religious outlook in every aspect of mass development; (vi) Only in such a case can there be an economic and social equality, only in such an event can there be unity and nationhood as Jawaharlal Nehru understands it: "I do not think that unity will come by merely repeating it. . . . It will come from below. Social and economic problems will inevitably bring other problems to the front. They will create differences along other lines, but the communal cleavage will go."

Without minimizing various other active elements in present-

day Hinduism, one can say with certainty that Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, both as personalities and as formative forces, are the most important. Mahatma Gandhi is the continuation of the nineteenth-century Hindu reform movements, as well as the resurrector of more humane and spiritual principles of old Hinduism applied to life. With Jawaharlal Nehru, at least in ideology, the break with the Hindu past is complete. Yet in spite of the basic differences of principle, these two remarkable men are in close co-operation. For their objective is the same—externally, independence by pacific means, and when that independence is attained, co-operation with the outside world; internally, a state which will function for the good of the Indian masses. As to the differences:

Mahatma Gandhi bases all life round religion or spirit, Jawaharlal Nehru round economics. Mahatma Gandhi proposes to keep the original pattern of Hinduism with some alterations, but he aims at giving it a new spirit, and working out a new *modus vivendi* to ensure equal rights to all. He stands for class from an occupational point of view, but the barriers between these classes should be flexible enough to allow the individual who finds his talents not fitted to his own class to pass to another. Jawaharlal Nehru wants the old system to go, root and branch. Mahatma Gandhi's solution for labour problems is not definite, but his plan for rural India is clear. It aims at reviving the village as the unit of the Indian nation, free within certain limits, self-sufficient rather than interdependent. Minimum mechanization and maximum hand-industry are in Mahatma Gandhi's mind the only solutions for surplus leisure and for a limited freedom with respect to the state. Mahatma Gandhi is a decentralist and a democrat. Jawaharlal Nehru's plan for rural India is not clear beyond

a proposition for abolishing the landlord system. His plan for labour in the cities is that of the current socialist system. He is a radical-centralist, that is, he does not accept autonomy of groups. But he is also a democrat.

In Mahatma Gandhi's lifetime there can be no break between the two leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru would not break even if he could, for he is sincerely attached to Mahatma Gandhi, and considers him the unique leader in India. Further, even if he wished to break away he could not do so without losing his hold over the Hindu masses, and to some extent over other Indian groups.

"Do the Indian people want an uprooting change?"

This is the question the Indian asks in speaking about Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru's answer is, "Let us find out by consulting the masses." But this proposition for a Constituent Assembly is only for the time when India will be free.

Besides these two prominent men, the Congress seems to be as vital and as strong as ever. It also remains the most representative body in India. More so for the Hindu than the Muslem. Nevertheless a great many prominent Muslems and a considerable number of young Muslems support the Congress. As to the masses, beyond the fact that they seem to have taken sincerely to constitutional ways, one can say nothing. Do they want Communalism? Will they stand for a united nation? Will they really gather round economic issues? All these are in the womb of time.

These are the Hindu personalities, thought-forces and, to some extent, the position of the masses in the Indian Melting-pot.





## CHAPTER XXIII

# Islam in the Melting-pot

ISLAM is a religion and a threefold code of life: individual, social, and political. For the majority of Muslems outside India, and for all Muslems in India, these three aspects are a seamless garment.

### (I) *Individual*

A belief in One God, in His Messengers (the prophets) and in the inspired Books. Mohammed is the last messenger. Monotheism is the alpha and omega of the Islamic creed. The opening line of the Koran is: "Praised be the God of all the worlds," and every Muslem begins his prayers with that line. It means that the Muslem is not a special favourite, but that God is the God of all life. If the Muslem at different times in his history has developed a superiority or inferiority complex, the fault is not in his Faith. The definition of a Muslem in the Koran is given as one who "submits to the Will of God," and one "who is the doer of good and the hater of evil. . . ." Islam is not different from any other religion in this basic respect. What may seem a little different in Islam is, first there is no intermediary between God and man's conscience; second, there is no duality. Body and soul are to be equally taken care of, and made worthy. Cleanliness, restraint, health are implicit in the Faith. An Islamic prayer is one in which body joins with spirit.

### (II) *Social*

An emphasis on two aspects of life: the relation of man to man, and Social Justice. They are interdependent, and two

principles underlie them: first, that there is a difference of language and culture between peoples, which must be mutually respected; second, that there is no race superiority. Islamic society is classless. Origins, colour, race are neither handicaps nor privileges. The criterion of superiority is based for the individual on knowledge, wisdom and moral attributes; and for a nation on the degree of *Social Justice* it can establish.

The economic creed of Islam derives from its conception of Social Justice. "Man is man because of his *labour*." "Men and women must enjoy the fruits of their labour. . . ." Hence the supreme emphasis is laid on labour. Capital is of secondary importance, and it is not *productive* in itself. Its function is to regulate labour and the economic relations of men. Therefore to *take interest* on capital is among the cardinal sins in Islam. Also property-rights are sacred. Whether always operative or not, these principles are still uncontested and unanimously agreed upon among those who call themselves Muslims.

### (III) *Political*

(a) The early period, beginning with the Prophet himself, lasted throughout the reigns of the first four Khalifs, namely Abu-Bakir, Omar, Osman, and Ali. That is thirty years. It was Democracy in the broadest sense. The head of the State, the Khalif, was elected by popular vote (*Ijama-Ummet*) just as the Americans elect their President. The Khalif was both the chief executive and head of the Faith. The civil and the military were under his orders. The legislative and the judicial were under the doctors of law and the judges. These were an independent body with the power to depose the Khalif if he departed from justice. On the other hand, the Khalif within the precincts of the Holy Law had his veto. The law was

God-made. That is, derived from the Koran and from Hadis (authentic sayings of the Prophet). The interpretation of the Law lay with the judges; they were allowed freedom of judgment (Ijtihat) and the right to select which laws were applicable.

Islam spread swiftly, so swiftly that the Western historian seems at a loss to account for it. In the writer's opinion, the spread of Islam was not due to its religious force merely, but also to its appeal to the democratic instincts of men. It was welcomed by oppressed peoples, and in its early stages was undeniably a great human revolution. It did the same as the Declaration of the Rights of Man did in the French Revolution. What Islam preached from a religious platform, the French Revolution preached from a political platform; and the Russian Revolution preached from an economic platform. Whether one approves or not of these three great human revolutions, one must accept them as facts.

(b) The second period in Islam began with Muaviye, the founder of the Emeviye dynasty. The very name dynasty denotes the end of the *democratic period*. The ruler who was chief executive was no longer elected. The post was hereditary. Nevertheless the Muslem Arab ruler called himself Khalif, though Islam was divided in its acceptance. Some believed, and still believe, that the Khilafat ended after the first thirty years of Islam; but the majority accepted the hereditary Arab Khalif as the head of Islam.

In the fifteenth century the Khilafat passed to the Ottoman Turks. The theoretic and spiritual power of the Turkish Khalif was accepted by the majority of Muslems, including the Indian Muslems.

The revolutionary, or rather evolutionary, aspect of Islam ended in the ninth century, when Islamic Law was codified

in Bagdad. "Ijtihat" (freedom of judgment), and the right of interpretation ceased. This gave stability, but also introduced the seeds of stagnation.

With the end of "Ijma-i-Ummet," that is, the right of the people to elect their ruler, the political side of Islam was no longer Islamic. The individual was divided from the social and from the political. The democracy which was woven of these three aspects of life disappeared. The new form barred the popular voice from politics and strengthened the position of the ruler, giving him the power of a despot. The Muslem masses still insisted on having a Muslem state and a Muslem ruler; but they ceased to question whether their state and ruler fulfilled the inalienable democratic spirit of Islam. In the opinion of the writer, it is this acquiescence of Muslems to any form of despotism, even to the most obscurantist, which has brought about their subjection. A government without the consent of the governed is a tyranny, and a people who passively accept any form of government must sooner or later lose their self-respect.

From the ending of "Ijtihat" the social side of Islam suffered still more. A God-made law can endure if men have the right to adapt its fundamentals according to the necessities of an ever-changing life. The supreme wisdom of Islam, one which differentiates it from the Mosaic law, was this adaptability. "Changing times bring changing laws," expresses the spirit of Islamic jurisprudence. This dynamism of Islam was again expressed by the Muslem atomist philosophers of the tenth century thus: "God creates anew from moment to moment; Time is composed of indivisible Nows, and if God were to cease to re-create from moment to moment, the Universe would vanish like a dream."

Islam entered the borders of India as early as 643. The

conquest of Sind by the Arabs was effected in the early eighth century, but did not penetrate into India proper. However, there were a series of inroads through North-Western frontiers by Afghan, Persian Mogul, Turkish, and other central Asiatic peoples from the eighth to the twelfth centuries. Muslem rule in India was an established fact by the end of the twelfth century, and then followed the inevitable clash between these two types of civilization. It is remarkable that comparatively accurate records were left by the Muslem historians of the Islamic period.

With regard to the clash between the Hindu and Muslem systems, the principal difference between them was that while the Islamic system gave latitude for social evolution, Hinduism gave latitude to the mind only and insisted on a fixed social pattern. The contact brought about changes in both.

With regard to the accurate Muslem records, contrasted with the vague and incomplete Hindu records, the reason for the difference is obvious. The purely metaphysical Hindu mind, after giving a set form to its society, concentrated itself on philosophy, religion, and abstract thought. The more objective and dynamic mind of the Muslem retained its interest in historical and ever-changing human phenomena.

The most important among the early documents is "Tahkik-i-Hind" ("An Inquiry into India"), by Alberuni. Alberuni came to India in the eleventh century, a Central Asiatic, in the retinue of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. A mathematician and astronomer of fame, he was naturally interested in science among the Hindus. After a study of Sanscrit and the sacred Hindu literature, he wrote his work in Arabic, the language of science among the Muslems at the time. After five odd centuries his book, which contained, besides science, an objective study of the manners and customs of the Hindus, is

still considered a "marvel of well digested erudition" by modern scholars; and they are still unanimous about its uniqueness as a record of Hindu life by a non-Hindu.

It influenced Muslem thought all over the world, and is one of the causes which has introduced a mystical and metaphysical ingredient into the hitherto objective and rationalistic philosophy of the Muslems. Moreover, to the newly arrived Muslem, for whom the obvious polytheism of the Hindu masses was a shock, it brought the realization that behind this symbolism was a belief in the Oneness of the Creator of life. One can almost call Alberuni the first bridge between the Muslem and Hindu intellectuals. Further, he freely criticizes not only the Hindu, but the Muslem of his time as well.

All conquerors are conquered in turn. But there is a difference between the conquerors who are attached to some outside Power and thereby retain their individuality, and the conquerors who have no outside attachment and must settle down on the land of their conquest and make it their permanent home. The Muslem conquerors of India were of the second kind, therefore destined to a greater degree of assimilation. Islam and Hinduism had to find a mutual settlement, with or without the desire of the conquerors and the conquered. The assimilation must have begun on top, for it is evident that the Muslem *élite* fell under the spell of Hinduism. A synthesis of Hindu and Muslem culture was soon created and a distinctly new art came into existence on the Indian soil. The very languages the conquerors spoke, Mongolic, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, etc., amalgamated with the Sanscrit, took its grammar, and came into being under the name of Urdu. The administrative machinery, especially the civil side of it, was predominantly Hindu. Converts to Islam multiplied. There was obviously some force used, but not on any extensive

scale. The spread of Islam among the Hindus was perhaps due to its democratic appeal to the lower castes. The majority of Muslims in India, with the possible exception of the Frontier Provinces, are Hindu by race.

The adjustment and amalgamation of the masses, though a slower process, took place perhaps more fundamentally. A common country, common interests, and perpetual proximity have knitted them into a greater unity than is realized outside. Discounting the riots, which are temporary and not general, the Muslim masses, both rural and city dwellers, are nearer to the Hindu than they are to any outside Muslim. Even the rabid communalist, in spite of his rigid ideology, is nearer to the Hindu communalist than he is to any Muslim outside India; and, as was to be expected, a tightening of social usages took place. The writer can say with certain knowledge that, with the possible exception of Persia (which she does not know) there is no other Muslim society in the world as rigid as that of the Indian Muslims.

When the Muslim regime reached its lowest point the Hindus began to rise and establish an independent rule here and there. But, unfortunately, theirs was as reactionary as that of Muslims. There is not much to choose between a *Sivaji* and an *Aurengzeb*, the typically narrow and equally cruel Hindu and Muslim rulers respectively. And the conquest of India was easier than is generally believed when one knows something of its political state before the British conquest. With the advent of the English, India entered a new stage on its development.

The Hindus in the earlier stage suffered less from the British rule than the Muslims. They were communally well organized for centuries; they had experience in the civil side of the administration; and they accepted foreign rule more



easily than the Muslems. Also Western penetration, through their educational and other activities, made them realize the weak point in their social pattern—the subdivision of the community, which if not removed would make alien rule perpetual. From the early nineteenth century onwards one sees all Hindu reform movements trying hard to remove caste barriers.

The Muslems, by the democratic nature of their society, have next to no communal organizations. Besides, conquering and ruling peoples rarely have. Economically, like all other conquering peoples, they lived on the backs of the conquered, at least in the early period of their conquest. In the Frontier Provinces Muslems had settled very early, therefore there was a rural class; and in the cities they dominated labour because of their numerical superiority, though even there they did not dominate capital. In the rest of India, the peasantry, the trader, and the middle class were mostly Hindus, and their hold on capital was complete.

There are two points worthy of attention as they have some bearing on the events of to-day, and probably of to-morrow. (i) Frontier Provinces were the homelands of the Muslems, and still are. In the rest of India, even when the Mogul regime was established, the Muslems were merely a ruling minority; and the nature of their rule, though not exactly that of a colonizing empire, was affected by the Hindu majority, who were to come sooner or later into their own. This fact stands out strongly in a certain separatist movement among the Muslems of the Frontier. We will speak of that later. (ii) The inability of the Muslem mentality to adapt itself to Capitalism. It is perhaps not mere coincidence that during the entire development and domination of Capitalism, Muslem society, economically speaking, sank lower and lower.

With all this in mind it is easy to see that it was natural there should be economic disintegration among the Muslims of India at the moment they ceased to be the ruling class, control the jobs, and impose taxes on the masses. A communal organization could have saved them at the time. They had none. The Muslim revival of Sir Saiyid Ahmad was an upper middle-class affair which did nothing for the Muslim masses. However, it was a landmark, for it brought together all those trends of thought which were on modern lines.

What was the stage of development among the Muslims during and after the Great War—the period which gave birth to a New India though the shape was still indefinite?

All India remained loyal to the British Empire during the Great War. The Muslim soldiers fought the soldiers of their Khalif in the Near East, side by side with Sikhs, Gurkhas, and Yorkshire troops. Clearly in the mind of the educated Indian, and dimly in the mind of the masses, there was expectation of a reward for this service. That was the Dominion Status. And, for the first time in recent times, the possibility of Hindu and Muslim unity around a political ideal was a reality. They made common cause.

The Muslim-Indian allegiance to England during the Great War demolished a strong historical myth—it showed that political Pan-Islamism was a mere bogey. The attachment of the Indian Muslim to the interests of his country was a greater reality than his solidarity with Muslims outside India. When there was a choice between the interests of India and their religious sentiment, the choice went to the interests of India. Had England given Dominion Status to India, the writer believes that the Khilafat agitation would have remained in the sentimental field only.

It would be useful for the Western Powers with Muslim

colonies to realize this point clearly; there is still a more or less common outlook on life among Muslems, but there is also a distinct sense of nationhood separate from their religious life. The Indian Muslem would resent an Afghan-Muslem domination and fight it; the Arab-Muslem would resent a Muslem-Turkish domination and fight it as much as he would any non-Muslem domination, if he ever got his independence. The German Emperor in the past, Signor Mussolini in the recent past, posing as protectors of Islam, were indulging in a futile theatrical gesture. The first objective of the Muslem peoples is for complete independence. And after that what they need is not a protector or suzerain so much as a collaborator and co-operator, when and wherever their economic and political interests demand it.

How did the Khilafat movement get mixed up with the Indian national struggle? What did it really mean?

The Muslem, as we have already said, considered the Khalif as the spiritual head of Islam. But this feeling differs from that of the Catholic allegiance to the Pope. Whereas the Pope has no temporal power, the Khalif must have temporal power in order to be recognized as the Head of the Faith. The Turkish Sultan who was also the Khalif had to have temporal power in order to remain a Khalif. The menace to Turkish Independence after the Turkish defeat in the Great War was a menace—in the minds of the Muslem Indians—to the Khilafat as well. This point was well realized by the British statesmen. So they made repeated declarations that, whatever the result of the war, the Khalif would have his temporal power; that is, the people he ruled would remain independent. So the Khalifat agitation seemed not so much due to sympathy for the Turks, threatened by extermination or subjection, as it is for the preservation of an *Institution*.

But this was only on the surface. The psychology of the Indian, especially that of the educated Indian, was a much more complicated one. The Turks were the last Muslem people to be threatened by a complete loss of independence. They were also an Eastern people. So when the Muslem and the Hindu collaborated to preserve the temporal power of the Khalif it was a question of self-respect of the East in general, as well as a religious question for the Muslems. Hence, in the Indian struggle for Dominion Status in 1920-24, the Khilafat was an issue which had a nationalist significance as well as a religious one; and it created a tie between the Hindu and the Muslem. Among the masses who did not understand this clearly, the poor Hindu who sacrificed his meal to give an anna to the Khilafat Fund became much more of a brother to the Muslem Indian than the other Muslems outside. As for the educated Muslem youth, they explained to the writer their sentiments on the subject in these terms:

"It was the only time when we fully tasted the ecstasy of national unity around India's independence. The Khilafat for us did not have the religious significance it had for the older generation, or for the masses. We even ceased to analyse Non-Co-operation. The supreme reality for us was that we were a united nation, and could stand by each other, shoulder to shoulder unto death. No one outside India can realize the sacred emotion which swept over all India by the mere fact of complete unity between the Muslem and the Hindu. It made 360 million people fast on the same day, pray at the same hour, and take the same vow of sacrifice for the independence of our Motherland."

In the opinion of the writer it is this psychology which brought the Khilafat agitation into the Indian national struggle

for independence. The Muslims at the time had strong and remarkable leadership. Maulana Mohammad Ali, Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal and others were crystallizing Muslim opinion around their persons and the ideas they stood for. They represented the ideal of independent India and the better organization and training of the Muslims as a part of their ideal. Mahatma Gandhi's leadership was sincerely accepted by the Muslims as much as by the Hindus. And Mahatma Gandhi accepted the Khilafat question as a side issue and stood by his Muslim collaborators. Hindu and Muslim were merely Indians struggling hand in hand for the ultimate independence of their common motherland.

Though this sort of ideal brotherhood within or between nations does not last, it creates, while it lasts, ideas and tendencies which carry on the sentiment into the future. But there also comes a revulsion, a reaction against it, due to a variety of self-interests or class-interests. It was especially so in such a country as India, first, because it has so many contradictory interests and divisions; second, because on the whole Indians have been subjected to foreign domination too long, and are not ready for a common and sustained effort and sacrifice for independence—as would be the case with a people who have always been independent. And the reaction came when Non-Co-operation was suspended. And the Muslims received a great blow to their religious feelings when the Khilafat was abolished by the Turks. And they could not understand at the moment the reason which led the Turks to abolish the institution. Further, there was no other completely independent Muslim nation to revive the Khilafat, or shoulder the responsibility of having such a white elephant. For every Muslim nation which stood for the Khilafat as an institution would be a target for the attacks of those Western

Powers who owned Muslem colonies. Rightly or wrongly they believed that a complete subjugation of Muslems would never take place so long as they had this sentimental allegiance to an outside institution. The frustration of Islamic feelings of the Indian Muslem is well expressed by Dr. Ansari in the introduction to the *Conflict of East and West* (by Halidé Edib, published by Jamia-Millia-Islamia Press, Delhi):

It is difficult for any one not Indian Muslem to realize what Pan-Islamism means to the Indian Muslems. . . . It is not a sentiment inspired by interest, policy or worldly wisdom; it has no definite practical end in view. But strange to say, it is just for these reasons that Pan-Islamist sentiment has been one of the Indian Muslem's most sacred and exalted passions. . . .

A little further he says:

Pan-Islamism in India was not in the main political. With the vast majority of Indian Muslems its appeal was purely religious. And thus a discussion of Pan-Islamism inevitably leads to a discussion of religion. . . .

But I feel that the Indian Muslems should understand that their perspective was faulty. They have a tendency, as have all those who are isolated, to identify not only their beliefs but also manners and customs with the prescriptions of their faith. Religion and social life are no doubt inseparable, and a society that overlooks the religious element is sure to drift from one vicious whirlpool to another. But the position of a society which lacks the judgment to distinguish between conservatism and stagnation is equally insecure.

This declaration of Dr. Ansari's confirmed the belief of the writer that Pan-Islamism for the Indian Muslem was a sort of sublimation or compensation for the loss of a thing without which his self-respect is not complete. If he himself had lost his political rights, he at least consoled himself with the fact that there was an Independent Muslem Nation which also

had the costly privilege of maintaining the Khilafat, the institution which, in his mind, was a necessity for the self-respect of the Islamic world.

Dr. Ansari was the last of the great Muslem leaders of 1920. And a closer contact, as well as being present at the discussions which took place in his house, made the writer believe that he and his late colleagues had brought something new into the Indian Muslem's political outlook. It was this: though he and his group believed that religion played the predominant part in shaping man's conduct and ideas, they also held that the political ideal must be conformed to the spirit and not to the letter of Islam. This point has already been discussed in the first part in connection with Jamia's teachings. Though small, the Jamia centre and what it stood for seemed to the writer the only clearly formulated political and Muslem social ideology. In its political aspect it seemed like an attempt to understand the *inalienable democracy* of Islam as it was in the earlier Islamic society.

It will be some time before India realizes Dr. Ansari's contribution to India's nationhood, for he has left almost no written personal documents. He was not merely a bridge between Hindus and Muslims. He was the symbol of a new political conception. He was often criticized because of his consistency. And consistency is not the usual characteristic of a successful politician. But his mission in life was not that of a successful politician, it was that of a pioneer. He clearly saw the incompatibility of Nationalism or narrow religion with the sort of democracy he dreamed for India. In a letter dated May 5, 1936, sent to the writer just before he died, he said, "I consider the brotherhood of man as the only real tie, and partitions based on race or religion are, to my mind, artificial and arbitrary, leading to division and factious fights.

Nationalism of a general and liberal type I can appreciate, but not the jingo nationalism of the German or the Italian type. Nationalism as a step to Internationalism I can put up with. I am deliberately using the phrase, 'put up with.' But, nationalism as it is conceived even among us Indians is to my belief not very helpful. The nationalism of a subject race is a defensive armour, and is the inevitable result of the grinding poverty to which the subject peoples are forced and the daily humiliations to which they are subjected. But, even that has its limits. I think it should be kept in bounds. Otherwise it is liable to react and do us harm."

This extract is by no means the only instance which proved Dr. Ansari's uncompromising belief in Democracy as the only objective of his political creed. Though he repeated that the religion of man shaped his social and even political creed, he did not believe in a politically separate Muslem community. He often said that future India, if it aimed at independence, must be a field of co-operation between men of different faiths. But though they must live according to the moral dictates of their faith, they must not bring theological subtleties into modern political forms.

During the writer's visit to Delhi, "Communal Award" was one of the frequent subjects discussed in his house. Communal Award, that is, eligibility to representative posts in proportion to the numerical strength of communities according to religion, was supported by Hindu-Communalists when in a minority and rejected when in a majority. Except Dr. Ansari and men of his views, the Muslims backed communal award everywhere. The gist of these discussions on communal award between Dr. Ansari and men of opposite conviction was this:

"We Muslims are being generous and more consistent when we uphold communal award both in Muslem majorities and



minorities. It is the only safeguard against communal friction. The Hindu, when in a minority, can no longer have a grievance if he has definite representation and proportional posts."

Dr. Ansari answered: "But it will be accepting the fact that Hindus and Muslems will neither trust each other, nor are able to co-operate without interference of a third power."

"What if they came to a mutual understanding on the subject?"

"I would oppose it still. It would perpetuate two things which prevent us becoming a nation in a modern sense: the fight for jobs by this or that community; the continuation of nations within a nation."

"But what do you say to the way the Muslem minority is treated?" Here they always gave a long list of grievances, showing how the Muslems were deprived of the chance of getting any representative post.

"Let the Muslems then vote for the best Hindu, and let the Hindu minority vote for the best Muslem, one who will work for the good of all."

Once the writer asked Dr. Ansari:

"May not the Communal Award be a temporary expediency to prevent Hindu-Muslem friction, until there is a civic education which will change this communal mentality?"

He gave the writer a long lecture, the gist of which was:

"No . . . civic education begins with experience. Let us face the disaster of even friction, rather than retard our civic education. If the Muslems as a body throughout India would back the Hindus who are against Communal Award in principle we could do away with the canker of Communal Award. This bone of contention over which we are fighting so shamelessly constitutes both the strength and the perpetuation of foreign domination."

## Single Nationhood and Abdul-Gaffar Khan

EVERY Indian, whether Muslem or Hindu, must adopt one of two alternatives with all its drawbacks and advantages as an ultimate goal in his struggle for independence: one Indian nation or two (even several) nations?

Dr. Ansari was an uncompromising advocate of single nationhood. But he was by no means the only representative of this ideal among the Muslems. The idea of a single nationhood for India had spread to the Frontier Provinces, and even among the tribes. The figure which symbolizes this conception on the Frontiers was Abdul-Gaffar Khan. He must be given proper space and an objective analysis, for no one knows whether the Indians will not reach that political ideal in spite of the tremendous odds against it.

Politico-religious risings led by picturesque and often fanatical figures are usual happenings on the Frontier. Although Abdul-Gaffar Khan's movement, erroneously called that of the "Red Shirts," was also a politico-religious one, it was quite unique.

Its differences were: (1) It had a simple but clear political aim, while previous risings were vague, carried on in the name of Allah, without any clear understanding as to what Allah wanted. (2) It was organized and led by a trained minority, while the others were in the nature of a human storm raised by a solitary figure. (3) It was in the name of the Congress, that is, it aimed at Independence and *unity of all India*, while the previous ones were regional, for the sake

of Muslems or for the Frontier areas, which are the homelands of the Muslems.

Its uniqueness lay, above all, in its *non-violence*. For the Frontiers that was a phenomenon which must necessarily interest both the historian and the psychologist. The Hindu, even the Muslem in India proper, may be a genuine believer in non-violence; but the consideration that non-violence is the only weapon possible for a disarmed nation against an armed is always there. The Frontier Muslems, especially the tribes, have or can procure arms, and can use them. If they have no chance of ultimate success, they have the power to worry and trouble the ruling power to a degree which the Indians not on the Frontiers have not. Further, they have a chance to escape from punishment because of the wild region they live in, and its strategic possibilities for concealment. Besides, the Frontier men are uneducated and simple to a degree, therefore cannot think of consequences for a far-off future. But, above all, the Muslem of that type considers his religion as that of a fighting man, who settles his differences by a fight to a finish.

Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking about Abdul-Gaffar Khan, says:

"It was surprising how this Pathan accepted the idea of non-violence far more so in theory than many of us. And it was because he believed in it that he managed to impress his people with the importance of remaining peaceful in spite of provocation. He had attained an amazing popularity in the Frontier Provinces by sheer dint of quiet, persevering work, undaunted by difficulties. He was, and is, no politician as the politicians go; he knows nothing of the tactics and manoeuvres of politics. A tall man, straight in body and mind, hating fuss and too much talk, looking forward to freedom for his Frontier Province peoples within *the framework of Indian freedom*."

Abdul-Gaffar Khan's photograph shows a man over six feet, a giant. He has a long gaunt face with sunken cheeks and burning eyes. His long and powerful arms hang at his sides awkwardly in the manner of a timid boy. As a matter of fact, there is something of the child in him—that courage of the child for whom there is no impossibility. Yet he is totally different from a child in another respect. He wholly lacks the "play-spirit." As one looks at his face the sense that "Life is real, life is earnest," seems to emanate from its tortured expression and luminous eyes.

Abdul-Gaffar Khan is forty-seven years old. His family belonged to the Mohmadzei tribe, and his father, Khansaheeb Bahram Khan, was the chief of the Utmanzei village in the Peshawar district. The village is about twenty miles west, and is that through which one enters Afghanistan. In brief, he was the child of that sturdy and rugged country already described in reference to the writer's visit to Peshawar.

Three personalities, representing three religions and outlooks on life, influenced his career. The first was his father.

Bahram Khan was the typical Frontier chief, a man of his word, trustworthy to the degree that crowds of people deposited their savings with him. It was the custom in the Muslem East of the early nineteenth century for men to deposit their earnings with a trustworthy man rather than with a bank.

"He knew no revenge and he had something in him which instinctively told him that there was no dishonour in being deceived;<sup>1</sup> it lay in deceiving," said Abdul-Gaffar Khan, speaking of his father (*Two Servants of God*, by Mahadev Desai, published by Hindustani Tiles Press, Delhi).

<sup>1</sup> This reminds the writer of Mr. Appleby, the man who sold newspapers in Hampstead. The writer asked him one day: "You keep no accounts, are you not afraid of being cheated?" The answer was the same as Bahram Khan gave his son: "I had rather be cheated than cheat."

Utmanzei village, before the British conquest, was of the kind already described in connection with Peshawar. The land was redistributed every five years by the council of elders, so as to keep equality in ownership. The chief had the same amount of land as the rest. His power had no material basis. But Bahram Khan's father was made a landlord by the British, given hundreds of acres of land. Hence Bahram Khan inherited a state, and was a well-to-do man.

His relations with the English were excellent. His people had all stood up for the British during the Mutiny. This, as well as his steadfastness and dignity, earned respect. The highest British officer in the land called him "Uncle."

He had no education, but knew the fundamentals of Islam. Innocent of all theology, he taught his sons the meaning of Islam as "Submission to the Will of God"; also as right conduct, faith, and love (Amal, Yakeen, Muhabbet). For him every man who believed in One God and acted rightly would secure salvation, any such man, whether he called himself a Muslem or not, was a Muslem for him.

Abdul-Gaffar Khan had an elder brother, Dr. Khansaheb. The writer got to know him at Salam House. Dr. Khansaheb, as has been told, was very different from Abdul-Gaffar Khan. Although he also was as simple and as straightforward as a healthy child, he had a lot of the play-spirit. Further, Dr. Khansaheb's politics were not very clear, but followed the younger brother's lead, partly because they were subject to the same early influence, partly because the younger brother has the spirit of the leader in him.

There were no schools in their district. The Mosque schools, which had taught the Koran and an elementary form of knowledge, had gone under after the British conquest. But there were a few Mission schools, which were not held in

good repute by the tribes. Bahram Khan, braving adverse public opinion, sent his sons to one of them at Peshawar. As a matter of fact Bahram Khan, who went to prison at ninety-five for having stood up for his opinions, appears to have been a believer in progress.

The brothers remained for two years at the Mission school. The Principal, the Rev. Wigram, must have been a fine representative of Christian civilization. He was the second personality who influenced Abdul-Gaffar Khan; and it was while he was there that he formed the early resolution of serving his people and raising their standard in the missionary spirit of which the Rev. Wigram was such a good example.

Meantime the elder brother passed his matriculation examination, and was sent to England to finish his medical studies. There was some fear that he might turn Christian, or settle down in England. He did neither, but he married a charming English wife. However, the second brother was not sent to England, although there was some talk of it. Instead, he wanted to enter the army. Because of his aristocratic descent this would have been easy. But when, during a visit to a friend in the army, he saw his friend insulted by an English officer of inferior rank, Abdul-Gaffar Khan gave up that desire. The rest of his education consisted of a year at Aligarh, and his own reading. Hence he is a self-made man in matters of education.

His first objective was to educate his people. As early as 1911 he established schools for them. And until the end of the war his activities were not revolutionary.

The Rowlatt Bills, which influenced India and brought Mahatma Gandhi into active politics, also flung Abdul-Gaffar Khan into political agitation. He had been, like the rest, expecting some sort of Home Rule as a reward of Indian

service to the British during the Great War. The Frontier was getting excited over the Rowlatt Bills, and meetings were taking place at which a hundred thousand people attended. Abdul-Gaffar Khan was arrested, not for any special revolutionary act, but for his increasing influence over the Pathans, and for the political awakening for which he was considered responsible. Why should a Pathan worry about what is happening in British India? The Rowlatt Bills were not for the Frontiers. But he was sticking to his conception of an India which would be united and free. Mahatma Gandhi's influence—the third person to influence him—began at this period. He was imprisoned, and treated quite differently from the rest. This was in 1919. During all his imprisonment he had fetters on his feet, but there were no fetters to fit his legs. "Whether a special pair was made or not, I do not know," he says, "but they were hard put to it to find a pair, and when they did put one on me, the portion above the ankle bled profusely. That apparently did not worry the authorities, who said I should not take long to get accustomed to it."

And he did get accustomed to it. What is more, he was having a practical training in inner non-violence, without which no one can be non-violent. Mahatma Gandhi describes training in violence as such: "You shoot at boards, then at targets, then at beasts. Then you are passed as expert in the art of destruction." But non-violence has no outward training. You become non-violent after submitting to violence without violent retort, after sticking to your belief and demonstrating in its favour by speech and action in the face of all violence. The first two terms of his imprisonment were the schools in which he trained himself in non-violence. And he is thankful for the opportunity of learning in the school of suffering. In

his mind the principle of non-violence is the only possible salvation of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

In 1920 he was released, but threw himself into the Khilafat Movement, and in 1921 he returned to his village and laid the foundation of a national school at Utmanzei, trying to establish branch schools all over the province. There was no question of civil disobedience or non-co-operation. But his teaching and his influence over the Pathans were not viewed with favour by the authorities. The Chief Commissioner spoke to Bahram Khan, asking him to tell his son to desist from establishing schools. "Why should your son take it upon himself to establish this school when no one else is interested in it?" said the Commissioner. The old man took his son to task and tried to make him give up the school. Said Abdul-Gaffar Khan: "Father, supposing all other people ceased to take interest in the Namaz (Muslem prayer), would you ask me to give it up?" "Certainly not," answered the father. "I would never have you give up your religious duties, no matter what others do." "Well then, father, this work of national education is like that," said Abdul-Gaffar Khan. Having thus obtained his father's blessing he continued, and was sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

Those three years gave him the final baptism in suffering. Fetters, grinding prison labour, solitary cells . . . he lost fifty-five pounds, and got scurvy and lumbago for chronic com-

<sup>1</sup> The following extract from a Turkish poet and pacifist expresses Non-violence psychology very well. It is a part of his "credo" and is entitled, "I believe":

"Bloodshed breeds violence, and violence brings forth bloodshed; Hatred is the fire lit by blood and can't be quenched by blood, I believe.

"Men are brothers . . . a fancy you say! Let it be, in that fancy with a thousand hearts I believe.

"Necks will be freed of yokes, wrists of fetters; Fists will be chained by that luminous chain I believe." (By Tewfik Fikret.)



panions. The Chief Commissioner sent word to him that if he would promise not to tour the villages he would be allowed to keep his school, and would be released. Abdul-Gaffar Khan rejected the offer. He was a model prisoner, breaking no rule. But he went further than that, he refused favours which the prison officials were willing to confer on him. That would be allowing others to break rules, that would mean a breach of his principle. He implored them not to favour him. There were poor convicts who were willing to do his tasks. He said to them, "Let me tell you in all frankness, I cannot possibly tell lies." Neither would he close his eyes to petty corruption that was going on in the prison. Some warders would smuggle forbidden articles to the prisoners in return for a sum of money. He started preaching to the warders, asking them not to soil their hands with bribery. One said: "I find it impossible to make two ends meet." Abdul-Gaffar Khan said: "I will not tell you what to do. But I may tell you what you are doing is wrong." The warder resigned. And as the influence of Abdul-Gaffar Khan was considered not the right kind he was transferred to Punjab jail. His fellow-prisoners there found it difficult to appreciate his rugged honesty, just as the prison warders and his fellow-convicts had found it difficult to understand him in his first jail. He told them: "Once you compromise a principle, you not only compromise truth, but you compromise self-respect. I know that those who did not think it a serious matter to receive contraband articles through obliging sources ended ultimately by bidding good-bye to their self-respect."

It was in Punjab jail that he formed friendships with Hindus and Sikhs and studied the Hindu scriptures, especially the Gita, and the Granth Sahib, the Holy Book of the Sikhs.

In 1924 he was out of jail, and was devoting all his time to social reform in his district. The national school he had established at Utamnzei gave him the handful of men with whom he was to start his organization known as the "Khudai-Khidmatgars," meaning "The Servants of God." They had to take the following oaths:

- (1) To be loyal to God, community, and Motherland.
- (2) To be always non-violent.
- (3) To accept no rewards for service.
- (4) To be free of fear and ready for any sacrifice.
- (5) To live a pure life.

The name of the Society once more brings us to the psychology of the Muslem. The first allegiance must be to the supreme "Idea," not to any symbol of it. All the rest is secondary. And that is what makes Abdul-Gaffar Khan what he is. That is what made the simple Muslems of Benares stand out as more uncompromising and distinct than the older and better organized Hindu workers.

The Servants of God were trained, and made to take long marches. Though the discipline was military, for Abdul-Gaffar Khan is a soldier in spirit, they were not allowed arms, not even lathis. The small body of men undertook to tour the district, to preach to the Pathans that violence, looting, bloodshed were wrong, and that their social system must be reformed. At first their uniform consisted of white hand-woven stuff, but as it became dirty in no time they adopted a brick-coloured chemise. Hence the name "Red Shirts," which had nothing to do either with the colour or with the aims of Soviet Russia.

Though these years were given to social work, the Servants of God had a definite political aim as expressed in their first oath: "To be loyal to . . . community, and Motherland."

The former meant the Muslem, and the second all India; and all India, in their minds, was represented by the Congress. In 1929 India was plunged into Civil Disobedience. And the five hundred Servants of God at once devoted themselves to carrying out the programme of the Congress. It consisted of picketing foreign cloth-shops and liquor-shops mostly. But if any member broke the rules of non-violence he was dismissed at once. In 1930 the European Press was full of their doings, and represented them as a violent lot, without specifying the sort of violence they indulged in.

In 1930 Abdul-Gaffar Khan was again arrested. His arrest caused tremendous excitement, and the membership of the society from five hundred swelled into thousands. There were meetings dispersed by lathi charges and shootings by the police.

To the writer the psychological aspect of the movement was more interesting than its political significance. Were they really non-violent? Could a people who believed in force for centuries be conditioned to non-violence?

Every Indian the writer questioned, whether for or against the movement, declared that they were non-violent. In the Frontiers the writer refrained from asking about them, as she sensed a too strong and pent-up emotion ready to explode. One unforgettable episode proved the depth of the feeling of the Peshawaris in regard to the Servants of God. She was walking in the main street of Peshawar with a few companions. They were a silent lot, and let her see the place for herself. After passing an arch they stopped before a high building and seemed to be lost in thought in its contemplation.

"This is the prison," said one of them, and continued: "The leaders of the Servants of God were imprisoned here; there was a meeting before it, and people were demonstrating. A young police officer tried to disperse them. They threw

mud and stones at him. Then he went away and brought a tank which passed over the bodies of the people."

It is not necessary to repeat my companion's description of how human bodies look when crushed by a tank; or describe the expression of the face of the man, as the words came grimly from his mouth. The writer asked:

"Were they really violent?"

"Not to my knowledge, though I was an eyewitness to the tragedy here. I cannot say whether the stone and mud throwing were done actually by Red Shirts or by the mob, for there was tremendous excitement.

"So far neither the report of the official committee which have investigated the 'Red Shirt Movement,' nor individuals, give any definite proof of violence on their part, beyond several instances of mud and stone throwing. That their presence excited the people there is no doubt."

They were all arrested and imprisoned. Did loss of property and personal liberty alter their faith? There are some instances which show weakening in some of them, when they paid security or apologized to get release. There are also instances when they have refused. Two cases are interesting. Haji Shah Nawaz Khan, the cousin of Abdul-Gaffar Khan, paid security for release. But this was badly received by his relatives, and they asked him to go back to prison to wash out the shame of his weakness. He shot himself, leaving a note in which he said that the disgrace could not be washed out by going back to prison; only death could cleanse him. Saiyid Wadud Badshah, a prominent worker, remained in prison until 1931, and when his old and decrepit father paid security that he might see his son before he died, the Saiyid was so ashamed of this sign or weakness that he shot himself.

The male relatives of Abdul-Gaffar Khan were all im-

prisoned, including his ninety-five-year-old father. The case of one of his nephews, Obeidullah Khan, is typical. He was put in Charsadda prison where conditions were so filthy that he went on a hunger-strike of thirty-eight days. He was released, his term being only a month and a half. But before he got through his convalescence he was again arrested and sent to Multan prison, where the conditions were as bad. As his request to be removed to another prison with better conditions was refused, he went on another hunger-strike of seventy-eight days, which is a record in all the Indian political struggle at the time. In the end the authorities gave in, and he was removed to another prison where he recovered. The attitude of the father and the uncle is equally interesting. They took it calmly and towards the end of the fast, convinced of the boy's approaching death, wrote a letter to the authorities, asking how and where his body would be buried. However, before the letter was sent, the boy was removed and his fast ended. The best sign that at least a minority have taken non-violence not only in the letter but in the spirit is the lack of bitterness or complaint, or any change in their attitude to their English friends. The father said to a Hindu friend: "There is one thing about this government. They treated him wonderfully after the breaking of the fast. It is for this after-care that I was grateful. For that saved his life."

All this shows the strength and force of the character of the Frontier men and their indomitableness. But it also shows that there is among them a new interpretation of force, which is very unexpected. Non-violence is the only form of force which can have a lasting effect on the life of society and man. And this, coming from strong and fearless men, is worthy of study. For no amount of pacifism can change the world or bring about peace, until the really strong and the armed lay

down their arms. In regard to non-violence in general Jawaharlal Nehru makes the following just remark: "... To submit to suffering for a cause without giving it or hitting back has a nobility and grandeur which forces recognition. And yet it is a thin line which divides this from suffering for suffering's sake. . . ." One must admit that among the best and most convinced pacifists there is this martyrdom complex or a sadistic trend. It is extreme individualism or sadism of a sort. There is no social utility connected with it. Again, Jawaharlal Nehru says: "There is always the possibility for non-violence to be made a cloak for cowardice and inaction, as well as the maintenance of the *status quo*." This also is often true. The conscientious objector during the Great War, convinced as he may have been, suffered less than the men who were at the front. In those armies where the conscientious objector would be at once shot, one saw no conscientious objectors. The supreme test for faith in anything, religious or otherwise, must be the willingness of a man to lay down his life. Applied to India, Jawaharlal Nehru's remark becomes even a greater reality. There were many Indians who received baton charges or went to prison. Yet some of them must have adopted non-violence because of physical timidity and a temperamental dislike to radical changes. But on the Frontiers in general, and in the case of Abdul-Gaffar Khan in particular, there was none of this. The suppression of civil disobedience on the Frontiers was quite different from that in India proper. Men did face death. There was no question of physical timidity, neither any excuse for inaction nor a desire to maintain the *status quo* in Abdul-Gaffar Khan's case. He was working hard to change the Muslem, both as an individual and as a society. Although he based his simple ideology on religion, his interpretation

of it was so universal, that instead of separating the Muslims from the rest of the world, he tried to make them so that they could co-operate with their fellow-men for the good of all. For the writer, his supreme importance lies in his having brought the simplest and truest conception of Islam into the lives of a most elemental people, though only for a limited number of them.

At the moment Abdul-Gaffar Khan is out of prison. He is barred from active politics. He lives at Wardha near Mahatma Gandhi, for whom he has great admiration and affection. His time there is divided between prayer and work (weaving, spinning, and working among villagers). The prayer part of it alone is no mean feat, for the daily Islamic prayers mean no end of bending the back; and for a man with chronic lumbago that is nothing short of heroism. True to his vows he leads a pure and simple life. He fasts weekly and keeps a silence day in the week. Though barred from active service to his cause he remains true to his ideal, which is that of Independence by non-violent means. Neither gas bombs nor machine-guns nor prison will make him turn his face from his objective, he repeats. Although every Indian nationalist repeats the same phrase much oftener than Abdul-Gaffar Khan, yet it is only he who is called "Public Enemy." If India is to be governed as a colony, the British Government is reasonable in calling Abdul-Gaffar Khan a public enemy, and debarring him from active political life; for he and his ideal, because of their dynamic quality, are contrary to Imperialist interests. On the other hand, if one day the British Government deems it more profitable to have India as collaborator, then Abdul-Gaffar Khan and his conception of Islam in action would be valuable assets.

In the opinion of the writer, the late Dr. Ansari and Abdul-

Gaffar Khan represent two fundamental principles in Islam towards which the world is moving. With Dr. Ansari it was Democracy; or rather, the kind of Democracy he believed in. It had nothing to do with the facile Democracy which backs a rabid Capitalism. And it is the only kind to which the Indian Muslem could submit, partly because he is unconsciously conditioned by his religion. The salient point in Dr. Ansari's "democracy," and in others who thought like him among the Muslems, is the *refusal to admit race basis in nationhood*. For Racism and Fascism must ever be contrary to the Muslem temperament. Therefore the Modern Hindu Socialist, especially such a type as Jawaharlal Nehru, will necessarily find in Islam of this sort his strongest ally in India. That Jawaharlal Nehru himself recognizes this is evident in the following lines taken from his *Autobiography*, p. 577:

I think the Muslem rank and file has more potentiality than the Hindu masses, and is likely to go ahead faster in a Socialist direction once it gets moving. *Just at the moment the Muslem Intelligentsia seems to be paralysed intellectually as well as physically, and has no push in it.*

The italic part we will discuss later. What he says in regard to Muslem rank and file is true, and it brings us to Abdul-Gaffar Khan, that is, to the second trend in Islam—Socialism. Abdul-Gaffar Khan is a Socialist, a moderate and liberal one. He also deems Socialism the only political creed compatible with Islam. Study, experience, and observation—in the mind of the writer—lead every student of Islam and Islamic society to this conclusion. The writer in her talks found out that the Muslem youth were more inclined to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Socialist leader, than to any other in the political field. Jawaharlal Nehru's hold over the Muslem youth, since he has been tested as a leader, has increased,



according to the latest news. And it is evident that Socialism has gained ground among the youth and the student organizations. There are a large number of young Muslims in the Congress Party; the Punjab Socialist Party consists mostly of Muslims, and the Frontier Socialist Party has the largest membership in all India. This Socialist tendency on the Frontiers is specially significant because of the clearness and the forcefulness of the people there. Therefore, one can say that the type of Democracy Dr. Ansari advocated, and the type of Socialism Abdul-Gaffar Khan represents, are in favour of the ideal of a common Indian nationhood for men of all faiths.

"But," says the Communalist, "Muslim and Hindu can never be welded into a single nation. There is a *separate Muslim nation* and a *separate Hindu nation*."

This brings us to another trend in Muslim India, the so-called Muslim Communalism. The reason why they are so called has been already explained when we told how there was no organized communalism which looked after the interests of the Muslim masses. Therefore, their basic principle so far has been to stand by a separate Muslim nation in India; and their psychology is that of fear of the Hindu Communalist who threatens to wipe out the Muslims whenever he gets a chance. The Hindu Communalist frankly admits his feeling, and there is a strong excuse for Muslim Communalism. Neither is this fear of the Hindu Communalist only among the Muslim Communalists. It is gaining ground among the Muslim Intelligentsia in general, to whatever political view he may belong. Here is an extract from the letter of a Muslim intellectual:

I think that some if not all, the allegations made against the Hindus are correct. The anti-Muslim feeling is very strong, and I do not think even Mahatma Gandhi has succeeded in softening or modi-

fyng this feeling. The Muslems are right in resenting this attitude, but wrong in thinking that they want to seek refuge with the British Government, and they are undermining their own position by withdrawing from the national camp and from most of the welfare associations. They want privileges and safeguards but their only hope, in my mind, lies in a harmonious combination of self-assertion and generosity.

Here is another extract which deals with the difficulty of association with the Hindu:

They (Muslems) are helpless, ignorant and ashamed, misrepresented by everybody, unable to explain or to justify themselves. They cannot walk with the Congress because very few Congressmen believe in unity without uniformity, and there are many who grudge them the social values which they have realized in their life. They cannot talk in terms of culture and progress, because historians have vilified them beyond redemption. . . . What part can they take in nation-building? If they work for the community they are communalists; if in spinners' association they are out of place as meat-eaters; and from uplift work (the work to abolish Untouchability) a great Hindu himself has warned them off.

This being the state of mind of the Muslem, helpless and ignorant when he is a member of the masses, a stranger in his country, and forbidden an active share of service when he is an intellectual, what can one expect the Muslem to do? To any student of Indian Muslem the answer is inevitably this: organize effort for the uplift of the Muslem masses even at the risk of being called a Communalist; for they are less taken care of than the Untouchables. Inaugurate Muslem spinners' associations, or any other association which is likely to bring economic relief to the Muslem community; found schools, welfare associations. . . . So far there is not much of any of this outside the Jamia centre, and what Abdul-Gaffar Khan has done for the Frontiers. And it is interesting to note

that the Muslems are realizing this and getting popular support whenever they stand for economic uplift among the masses. The Proja Muslem party, formed on the basis of the economic demands of the tenantry of Bengal, defeated a most prominent Muslem Communalist, and one with a title too, Sir Nizammeddin of Decca, in the last elections. Although Communalism cannot solve the Indian puzzle, if the Muslem Communalist would leave his negativism in the economic and social field and work for the Muslem masses, it would bring relief and raise the standard of the Muslem masses. *It would be more profitable for India if this were to be undertaken by non-Communalist Muslems.* But the existence of the Muslem Communalism is tied up with Hindu Communalism. It will last as long as Hindu Communalism lasts.

Here is an extract from another Muslem intellectual which touches a sore spot in the Muslem heart:

Since your departure "Nationalism" has hit them (Muslems) hard in the matter of language. It is a matter of historical fact that all the spoken languages of North India owe their development to Muslem patronage, but now "Nationalism" has decided that words of foreign origin should be excluded from the national language, and it should be called Hindi and not *Hindustani*—a name to which Muslem opinion had agreed—and it should look back to Sanscrit, which was never a spoken language, for not only technical terms but words of daily use.

The writer belongs to that school of culture which stands for purity in language, therefore she should be on the Hindu side in this question. But she is not. The reason is because what she *understands* by purity is to bring the *written language as near as is possible to the spoken*. For technical terms she believes in international unity.

What the Hindu calls foreign (Persian and Arabic) is no

longer foreign to the Indian, Hindu or Muslem. The use of words for over a thousand years—whatever their origin—has made the Indian more familiar with them than with obsolete Sanscrit terms. As for the technical, an outsider cannot see how the Sanscrit can supply terms which have been created together with the evolution of new science and modern thought. The triumph of the Hindi, in the first instance, may separate the national language more from the spoken and the living; in the second instance (technical side) even if Sanscrit were able to supply the technical terms, it would be an obstacle for the intellectual and scientific internationalism which is a necessity for the good of us all.

This is the gist of what a Muslem intellectual of very broad view said to the writer in 1935:

“Up to the latter part of the nineteenth century language evolved towards unity. The written language did increase the Sanscrit words but only by *taking those which are of current use*. It looked as if by calling our language Hindustani and dropping the term Urdu and Hindi we would arrive at a single written language for cultural and educational purposes. Now the separatist tendency among the Hindus in language under the name of Hindi will disunite us more than religion has done in the past.”

The despondency of the Muslem intellectual was further analysed by another Muslem, who at the same time throws light on the political aspect as well:

“The Muslem intellectuals, unless they take to an imported ‘ism’ of a sort, have lost their bearings. Let me tell you that when they take an imported political creed it is invariably Socialism. The trouble about Socialism in Muslem India is this: We have the Muslem Socialist who derives his political

creed from his religion. He naturally appeals to the masses and has a future. But he invariably refuses to adapt it to the needs of time and confuses economic and theological issues; we have those who have taken Marxism and are more Marxist than Marx. And there are three things in Marxism—at least in its form in Soviet Russia—which go against our grain: (1) Abolition of ownership. . . . Islam holds property rights sacred, but could and would limit them. (2) Dictatorship and regimentation . . . Islam must have a reasonable amount of popular voice and control over the State. (3) Attack on religion. . . . I need not tell you what this means to us all. Therefore, though the Marxists are the most definite and outspoken Socialists in India, they have no popular support. The masses must have economic relief and religion, in what proportion is not for me to say. Neither the educated and the intellectual, nor the masses among us, can do without religion, but they must have and are clamouring for a definite and workable economic and political system.”

“What do you propose?”

“Nothing. If we had a great mind among us who could formulate a Muslem Socialism of a workable sort it would give us all an aim and unite us around a single idea. It would also fill the gap between the intelligentsia and the masses.”

“While waiting for the Muslem Karl Marx, what do you think the Muslem Intelligentsia should do?”

“Prepare the data to be used by the future Karl Marx. I know no Muslem student in Europe who has given us an objective historical thesis on the economic principles and their effects on Islamic society.”

With all this in view one can say that the Muslem Intelligentsia seem paralysed because they are too progressive to

find comfort in the theological entanglement of the great number of Muslem writers; and too universal in taste and doctrine to admit Hindu Racist and Fascist tendency in language or in other fields.

However, a recent letter from a Muslem from India indicates a softening of the tension between the Muslems and Hindus, thanks to Jawaharlal Nehru:

Jawaharlal Nehru is to-day India's representative personality. He does not dominate the Congress and often has disagreements with its policy. But he is patient and tactful with the old, abiding by any basis of co-operation which Mahatma Gandhi suggests when he is called to mediate. To the young he is an ideal leader, and even among the Muslem youth he enjoys great prestige. He is definitely non-communal, and though his ideas on other subjects may be vaguely expressed he has never given cause for suspicion in this matter. I think there will be far greater chance of co-operation between the Hindus and Muslems when Jawaharlal Nehru really dominates the Congress.

He has several able Muslem lieutenants, and I think Socialism and regard for Jawaharlal Nehru go together in the minds of our youth. Lately several Maulanas who delivered theological lectures in the Jamia showed themselves pronounced Socialists, and I believe by degrees Socialism of some kind will unite the Muslems. For the present it seems nothing else can.



## CHAPTER XXV

# One Indian Nation or Two Indian Nations ?

MAHATMA GANDHI, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Ansari, Abdul-Gaffar Khan, and quite a number of other leading figures under the banners of different "isms" stand for one Indian nation, the Communalist for two nations. But the Communalists must be divided into two categories, the moderate and the extreme. The moderate Communalist believes in two nations, but he has a case and a system. He believes that two nations can live together subject to communal organizations, and find a political solution in separate electorates or some such expediency agreed upon by both sides. The extreme Hindu Communalist, though he accepts the two-nation basis, refuses to come to terms. His mentality is that of the early Aryan conquerors towards the Dravidians, or of the German Nazi towards the Jew. But the German and the Hindu situations differ. Jews are a few hundred thousands in Germany, while the Muslems are one-fifth in India proper and four-fifths in the Frontiers. Further, Germans are masters in their country, and Hindus are not. Political exterminations can be done only by the consent and help of a third Power. Besides, there is a fundamental difference between the Muslem and Jewish mentality. The Jew has a "portable Fatherland," though he dreams of a time when he will eventually settle down and establish his Fatherland in Jerusalem. The Muslem has no "portable Fatherland." He considers the soil from which he has sprung as much his own as it is the Hindu's. As for the extreme Muslem Communalist, he is even a greater



stumbling-block in India's struggle for independence than the extreme Hindu Communalist. He is no good for his community, for he has no constructive plan for its uplift. As to his attitude towards the Hindus, he deludes himself that by the mere fact of calling himself a Muslem (without any understanding of its broad and enduring principles), and by the capacity he has both for dying and killing more readily than the Hindu, he will easily dominate the Hindu in the future. Though he sincerely believes that Muslem India is a separate nation, he has never thought out whether it is possible or not to have two nations living in the same country in a modern State. Hence the moment it comes to a communal settlement on communal lines there seem two alternatives: either admit that a third Power must be there to keep the peace, or consider that India is face to face with an everlasting impasse. But no one in India can dare declare openly that he stands for foreign domination, although he may think it necessary and inevitable under the circumstances. However, the events of the last few months indicate a slight swing towards a single-nation basis. And this swing for unity or co-operation between the Hindu and the Muslem is evident in the following instances:

I. The orientation of the Muslem League.

The writer refrained from presenting the Muslem League in the preceding chapter, for she was not able to understand its politics in 1935. Its members were composed of men of widely different political outlooks. Further, no one talked of the League in any way which showed it as an arbiter of Muslem destiny. The events of the last few months have brought it into such public notice that it becomes necessary to explain its past and present orientation.

The following is an extract from the letter of a Muslem Indian, a keen student of Indian politics:

The Muslem League was founded in 1906 by the Aga Khan and others as a counterbalance to the Congress, which was becoming so extremist that our rulers thought it worth while to enlist Muslem support against it. But soon the progressive section of our community entered and by-and-by took possession of it. In 1916 it held its first session at the same place as the Congress, and made what is known as the Lucknow Pact with the Congress, determining the rights and the positions of the Muslems. Up till 1922 there was full co-operation between them, the League along with the Khilafat Committee even taking the initiative in the agitation carried on from 1918 to 1922 against repression in India and anti-Muslem Imperialism in the Near East. But after 1922 the League became anti-Hindu and reactionary, till it broke into two sections and lost all prestige.

Last year, mainly through the efforts of Mr. Jinnah and the Nationalist Muslems—among whom Haliquzzaman was very prominent—the League was revived to serve as a platform for the progressive Muslems. For the present Mr. Jinnah and Haliquzzaman are its most prominent personalities, and in Bombay and the United Provinces it has succeeded in securing a not altogether negligible number of seats. Its aims are to be progressive, to co-operate with the Congress as an independent but sympathetic body.

The deduction made by the writer in regard to the League is that it becomes representative whenever it is led by the progressives and seeks a peaceful solution of Hindu-Muslem differences.

II. A more positive sign of Hindu-Muslem unity is in the following news item the writer saw in the weekly issue of the *Manchester Guardian* (August 7, 1937):

The ban on the entry of Abdul-Gaffar Khan into the North-West Frontier Province has been withdrawn by the provincial government. It was known that during his recent interview with the Viceroy Mr. Gandhi raised the question of the North-West Frontier, and particularly this prohibition on the entry of the local Congress party leader.

Abdul-Gaffar Khan's personality and work has been dealt with in the preceding chapter when the removal of the ban was not foreseen in India. As far as the writer can judge, his entry into North-West Frontier Province may mean two things: first, the majority of the most virile and compact Muslem group in India will work hand in hand with their Hindu countrymen on national issues. For those who know Abdul-Gaffar Khan's hold over the Frontier Muslems and his prestige as a leader, there is no doubt about it. All Indian Muslems, whether they agree with Abdul-Gaffar Khan's politics or not, are unanimous in declaring that he has achieved a remarkable transformation in the life of the Frontier Muslems. Besides the considerable social changes he has been able to bring about, he has been the means of making a large number of his countrymen take to industry, trade, vegetable gardening, and other peaceful occupations, and has saved them from the clutches of the moneylenders. Again, the Muslems of all shades of opinion agree that Abdul-Gaffar Khan is at the present the only Muslem leader who can work steadily among the masses and not merely rouse them to temporary exhibition of political or religious passion. The second implication of the removal of the ban against Abdul-Gaffar Khan's entry into North-West Frontier Province is of equal importance. On page 338, when the removal was not even talked of, the writer said: "... if one day the British Government deems it more profitable to have India as collaborator, then Abdul-Gaffar Khan and his conception of Islam in action would be valuable assets." Has that day come? And will the Indian triangle, namely the British, the Hindu, and the Muslem, co-operate for any length of time? It is not possible to answer the questions yet. For the moment, the situation in India is well expressed by a Hindu friend of standing:

The situation in the country has improved. . . . We are, God willing, in for a fair spell of progress and some amount of welfare work for the masses. How long it can last God only knows. . . .

Supposing the present signs pointing at the superior strength of those who stand for a single Indian nation should fail, will India then be led by Communalists who believe in two Indian nations? Considering the progress achieved in India and the inability of a communalist organization to cope with the requirements of a modern nation, the writer is disposed to think it not possible for any length of time. Therefore, if the two-nations idea persists it has to have an utterly different basis. And the idea which presents a two-nations basis on a different plan from that of the communalists is called the Pakistan National Movement, which maintains that India, constituted as it is at the present, is not a single country but that it is a bi-national subcontinent comprising Pakistan and Hindustan—the national homes of two nations, Muslims and Hindus respectively.

The founder of the movement is considered to be Mr. Rahmat-Ali, a Muslem in the early forties, whom the writer interviewed in London first, and saw later in Paris. He is from Punjab. It is evident that the formative influences of his early youth led him to mix nationhood with religion, and his contact with the Hindus led him to believe that the Muslems can expect no quarter from the Hindus, and must therefore either organize themselves to meet the coming danger of Hindu domination, or go down for ever. In speaking about the British it was also evident that he was under the influence of what he read about European expansion, mostly at the expense of Muslem nations, and the exploitation of the subject peoples by Western Imperialism.

Mr. Rahmat-Ali finished his education in England, obtaining M.A. and LL.B. with honours from the Universities of Cambridge and Dublin. He was an able lawyer, interested in the creative side of political history, but he had forsaken the legal field and had founded the Pakistan National Movement in 1933. At the moment the dominating passion of Mr. Rahmat-Ali's life seems to be the Muslem destiny in India. He can speak of it with the kind of eloquence which reminds one of a lawyer pleading a case, but he can also speak of it with simplicity and feeling. The writer noticed that whatever bitterness he might have had against the anti-Muslem Hindu mentality which had hurt him in his youth, he does not allow it to influence his outlook in regard to Pakistan. Whether the Pakistan National Movement will ever have a practical value in the solution of the Hindu-Muslem problem is a huge interrogation point. But an impartial student of present India has to keep it in sight, for the forces which uphold the two nations idea in India are still considerable.

The writer proposes to present the essence of the Pakistan National Movement in the words of its founder, based on the notes of this interview.

"What is the origin of the Pakistan National Movement?"

"For a satisfactory answer I must go through the history of the last eighty years. The Muslem Empire fell in 1857. There is a point—a very important point—in connection with the Indian Muslems which is not clearly understood abroad. First the Muslems had their homelands in Pakistan; that is, Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (also called *Afghan Province*), Kashmir, Sind, and *Baluchistan*. The name Pakistan I derived from the names of these five Provinces. The Muslems have lived there as a nation for over twelve hundred years, and possess a history, a civilization, and a culture of their own.

The area is separated from India proper (Hindustan) by the Jumna; and *it is not a part of India*. Although twelve hundred years ago there were Hindus and a Hindu Empire, since 712, for over a thousand years, they (the Hindus) have been a minority community there.

"The total population of Pakistan is 42 millions, of which 32 millions are Muslems. Their racial origins are from Central Asia, and socially their type of civilization is totally different from that of Hindustan. Islam, as a social, moral, and political system, is the key to, and the outstanding feature of, the Pakistani nation. I want you, Madam, to clearly understand this basic point. The Muslems in Pakistan are in their national home. The Muslems in Hindustan (i.e. India proper) went there as conquerors. Therefore Hindustan was the Muslem Empire, where for over nine hundred years they ruled over a vast native majority. But when they lost this Colonial Empire, as distinct from Pakistan, the Muslems who settled in these Muslem Imperial Dominions of Hindustan became a minority community in Hindustan. I have nothing to say against it: it is a fact.

"Now, the fifties of the last century were a critical period in their National as well as Imperial history. At the time of the fall of their empire, had the Muslems possessed leaders with vision and courage, they could have preserved the national as well as territorial integrity of their homelands in Pakistan. The distinction between Pakistan and Hindustan (India proper) has been, and shall ever be, clear as the midday sun. While in the former they are in their national home, in the latter they are a minority community, who had once ruled there by right of conquest. It is a tragedy that this historical reality was callously ignored. The two—Pakistan and Hindustan—were confused. Hence the present catastrophe.

Even at this momentous hour, when the future of both peoples—Pakistanis and Hindustanis—is being remoulded, this basic truth is being perverted by the interested parties—British Imperialists, Hindu Capitalists, and Muslem Careerists. While the British and the Hindu are consolidating their respective positions, the Muslem politicians are propagating theories fatal to the future of the Fatherland.

“With few honourable exceptions, the Muslem politicians are a crowd of careerists who can be divided into two categories: (1) ‘Communalists’: they are pro-British, but anti-Hindu. Their policy is subservient to the British. (2) ‘Nationalists’: they are pro-Hindu but anti-British. Their policy is subservient to Hindu Capitalism and Hindu Nationalism. But both the ‘Communalists’ and the ‘Nationalists’ have no policy of their own. Nor have they ever considered that there is, and shall ever remain, a distinct Muslem Homeland in Pakistan, which must not be confused with Hindustan and Hindu Nationalist interests.

“This state of affairs lasted till 1932. The Round Table Conferences in London, 1930–1933, conceived the ‘Indian Federation.’ In that Federation, Pakistan was made only an administrative unit of and, therefore, under the ‘Indian Federation.’ Thus the Pakistanis were to be reduced to a mere minority community belonging to the Hindu nation and, subordinated to the supremacy of Hindustan, they were to be pariahs in their own country. It is this grave menace to the national existence which has led us to create the Pakistan National Movement, which is founded on a political scheme based on an age-old reality hitherto ignored. Our scheme is a plan for an independent and separate Pakistan composed of the five Muslem Provinces in the North and possessing equality of status with Hindustan, as with other civilized nations, in

the comity of nations. The Movement holds that only this solution can ensure honourable existence to both nations—Muslims in Pakistan and Hindus in Hindustan—and, also, put an end to the exploitation of both by British Imperialism. We proposed it to the Round Table Conferences as well as to the Hindu delegates, and finally appealed to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee. But both the British and the Hindu rejected our demand for national honour and justice. However, we are irrevocably determined to fight to the last.”

“How are you going to obtain it without the consent of the British Government?”

“We have done our best to convince them that Pakistan for us is a life and death necessity. But they decline to consider our demand. And we, on our part, refuse to surrender our national heritage. They imagine that we are aiming at the revival of the old Muslim Empire; that we are Pan-Islamists. While they appreciate Hindu Nationalism, Pakistani Nationalism they consider to be ‘Empire’s Danger Spot.’ It is a mistake, an aberration. True, the Pakistan National Movement aims at the reintegration of the Muslim nation in Pakistan; but that does not make us anti-British or anti-Hindu. We are not even Pan-Islamists. We are simply Pakistanis and our faith fortunately happens to be Islam. That is all. We are as proud of our history as we are confident of our future. We know that *within Hindustan we will be a minority community, but, outside it, a virile nation of forty-two millions.*

“To realize the true position of our Fatherland, Madam, permit me to remind you that we, thirty-two million Muslims of Pakistan, constitute about one-tenth of the whole Muslim world. Again, out of a total number of fifty-four nations who are members of the League of Nations, no fewer than fifty-



one are smaller than Pakistan—both in population and in area. Our area is four times that of Italy, three times that of Germany, and twice that of France; and our population seven times that of Australia, four times that of Canada, twice that of Spain, and equal to France and Italy, considered individually. We have every reason to be proud of our Fatherland, and we are resolved to defend its national integrity against any invasion, be it of ideas or arms, and Muslem or non-Muslem.

"I admit that in the present struggle our back is to the wall, but we remember that in this very land our forefathers successfully faced far worse situations than we have to meet to-day. For us it is a question of 'To be or not to be.' We know that Pakistan is our destiny. It may or may not be realized in my lifetime; but, with time, it is sure to command recognition and become for the people of Pakistan an ideal worthy of the highest dedication."

"What is the position of the Pakistan National Movement in the territories which comprise Pakistan?"

"The seed sown in 1933 has taken root and our work is progressing favourably. The Pakistan National Movement has its propaganda centres all over Pakistan. In all Provinces of the Fatherland we have our organizations. Apart from pamphlets, tracts, handbills, and other literature issued regularly by the Provincial centres, a weekly newspaper under the title of *Pakistan* is being published to propagate the ideals of the Movement. The mass of the young and energetic are with us and they know that 'Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.' It is our faith that we of this generation are ordained by fate to protect Pakistan which will be the heritage of our posterity.

"The present may frown upon us, but I have my eyes fixed on the future, which is sure to smile on our sacred cause.

Till that moment arrives, we will face the ordeal like true sons of Pakistan."

"When and if the Pakistan ideal is realized, could it be economically self-sufficient?"

"Why not? Pakistan has vast resources—both moral and material, and with the exit of British Imperialism and Hindu capitalism we can surely pay our way. The top-heavy administration must disappear and administrative services must be made to work for the nation, not the nation for the services. The whole administration is now recruited by soulless bureaucracy on a lavish scale of remuneration, and is run in the interest of both British Imperialism and Hindu capitalism, but mostly at the cost of the poor taxpayer and pauperized peasantry. I have fully worked out that side of our national life and, quite frankly, I have no doubts on that account.

"We have a first-class port in Karachi, and a beautiful coastline for fine harbours. Pakistan has the most productive soil on the bi-national sub-continent, and it teems with every variety of agricultural produce. Even our mineral resources are in no way inconsiderable. Our commerce and industry are growing. In addition to the indigenous textile industries, cotton and woollen mills are already working in Pakistan. When these resources are added to the revenues derived from the customs, posts and telegraph, excise, land revenue, income tax, and railways, which now go to the Government of India, we can look forward confidently to our future."

"Have you thought out the form of government Pakistan aims at?"

"Our first aim is to achieve independence for Pakistan—both from British Imperialism and from Hindu capitalism. For the moment this question eclipses all other questions. As

to the form of government, one thing is certain. It will be fundamentally both democratic and socialistic. Whether it will be federal or unitary can be left to be determined later by the free will of the nation, when we have secured the existence of the Fatherland."

"What will be the effect of the Pakistan National Movement on the Muslem-Hindu problem?"

"The Movement offers the only permanent and honourable solution of that age-old problem. Any understanding and co-operation between individuals as well as nations, if it is to be lasting, must be based on mutual respect for the rights of one another. Given honourable existence to both nations—Muslems in Pakistan and Hindus in Hindustan—the national pride of each will be satisfied, and the historic clash replaced by neighbourly goodwill and friendly co-operation.

"The British and the Hindu, with different motives, have tried to confuse the underlying causes of the problem. But the incontestable fact remains that, in its fundamentals, *the clash is neither inter-religious, nor inter-communal, nor even economic. It is, in fact, an inter-national conflict between two national ambitions—Muslem for survival and Hindu for supremacy.*

"The Hindu refusal to recognize Pakistan is at the root of the problem. To Pakistan they deny that right of self-determination which they claim for Hindustan. They allege that Pakistan is a part of Hindustan because thousands of years ago their Empire extended to parts of Pakistan, and that this had made it theirs for all time. True, before our advent in A.D. 712 certain parts of Pakistan were included in the Hindu Empire. But does that fact make Pakistan theirs for ever? If so, we could claim Hindustan, as it was part of our empire for a thousand years.

"You see, Madam, in disputing our right to Pakistan on

that basis they bring into question theirs to Hindustan. *If Hindustan is theirs because they form three-quarters of its inhabitants, Pakistan is ours because we constitute four-fifths of its population.* We have acquired our title to Pakistan by the same canons of international law which have given them theirs to Hindustan. For the last twelve hundred years we have sacrificed the flower of our youth, not only in the defence of our title to Pakistan, but also in the service of Hindustan. We have lost Hindustan, but it is ridiculous for anyone to suppose that, in any circumstances, we will ever surrender Pakistan.

"Their claim to Pakistan on the basis of bygone empire is simply absurd. We had our empires, as they had theirs, and with them disappeared their boundaries. Therefore the sooner we forget the imperial frontiers the better for us both. Let the dead past bury its dead. The present degradation of both nations urgently calls upon us to put an end to this tragic folly. We all have lessons to learn from our present plight, but none, surely, is more plain than that Pakistan and Hindustan should live as good neighbours.

"If the Hindus were realistic they would understand and accept the honourable solution proposed by the Pakistan National Movement. It is my unalterable conviction that only the firm establishment of an independent Pakistan can finally solve the Muslem-Hindu problem. The Jumna is the boundary river between Pakistan and Hindustan, and across it we stretch our hand of goodwill and friendship to Hindustan. Will they grasp it in the spirit of good neighbours, recognizing Pakistan as we do Hindustan?"

"How will it affect the position of the forty-five million Muslems in Hindustan proper?"

"The truth is that in this struggle their thought has been more than a wrench to me. They are the flesh of our flesh and

the soul of our soul. We can never forget them; nor they, us. Their present position and future security is, and shall ever be, a matter of great importance to us. As things are at present, Pakistan will not adversely affect their position in Hindustan. On the basis of population (one Muslem to four Hindus), they will still be entitled to the same representation in legislative as well as administrative fields which they possess now. As to the future, the only effective guarantee we can offer is that of reciprocity, and, therefore, we solemnly undertake to give all those safeguards to non-Muslem minorities in Pakistan which will be conceded to our Muslem minority in Hindustan.

"But what sustains us most is the fact that they know we are protecting Pakistan in the highest interest of 'the Millet.' It is as much theirs as it is ours. While for us it is a national citadel, for them it will ever be a moral anchor. So long as the anchor holds, everything is or can be made safe. But once it gives way, all will be lost.

"Times come when even brothers have to part. Cruel as such times naturally are, the highest good of the Millet must come before everything else. Grave and grievous dangers threaten the heart of our Millet on the bi-national sub-continent and, if we are to live, we must plan our future in terms of centuries. We firmly hold that for the being and well-being of the Pakistani as well as Hindustani Muslems, only the ideals of the Pakistan National Movement point the way to salvation.

"The nobler spirits among them appreciate this truth and are, therefore, actively supporting the Movement. They are fully conscious of the fact that Pakistan's struggle is as vital to them as it is to us. We all know that the idea of earth-rootedness is repugnant to Islam. The world is remoulding itself, and political boundaries are disappearing before the tide

of moral and spiritual allegiances. Sooner or later, but sooner rather than later if we can make it, Nature's decrees are bound to be obeyed. Therefore, if all of us hold fast and remain true to our teachings, we have every hope that the future will see us even closer to one another than we are at present."

"Isn't there an alternative in 'one Indian nationhood' for you all?"

"No, Madam, certainly not! We are not Indians: we are Pakistanis. We can understand 'one Indian nationhood' for the Indians themselves; but for us, the Pakistanis, it would mean our national death. Has any nation in the history of the world ever committed national suicide in the interest of its neighbours' unity? I believe not. Defeat is a curse, but surrender, a sin. We know that the British Imperialist and the Hindu Nationalist, for purposes of their own, want us to commit self-strangulation in the name of 'United India.' But this we will never do. To unite India is one thing, to usurp Pakistan another.

"Don't you think, Madam, that India is vast enough to hold us both as distinct nations? Permit me to remind you that it is equal to Europe without Russia. Whilst in Europe, in about the same area as that of India, and with about the same population, there live and flourish no fewer than thirty nations—all with one and the same religion, the same civilization, and the same economic system, surely it is not only possible, but highly desirable for our fundamentally distinct nations to live under our own separate national governments in Pakistan and Hindustan.

"Geographical division and ethnical distinction apart, please don't forget the 'Himalayas' of human heart and soul. Our religion, culture, history, tradition, literature, economic sys-

tem, laws of inheritance, succession, and marriage are fundamentally different from those of the Hindus. These differences are not confined to the broad basic principles. Far from it. They extend to the minutest details of our lives. We, Muslims and Hindus, do not inter-dine; we do not intermarry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress are different. In the presence of these incontrovertible realities to try to unite us politically and physically by destroying the Pakistani nationhood would be the most grievous of disasters. Like every other nation in the world we have a definite mission for the service of mankind, which we can fulfil only if we protect the purity of the Pakistani soul. Therefore for us to seal our national doom in the interest of 'One Indian Nationhood' would be a treachery against our posterity, a betrayal of our history, and a crime against humanity for which there could be no salvation."

According to a considerable number of Muslims in or out of politics whom the writer questioned in regard to the Pakistan National Movement, its adherents are mostly in Punjab or among Muslim students who live abroad. Further Indian Muslim opinion affirms that, with Adbul-Gaffar Khan in the North-West Frontier Province, no opposing political idea would be considered seriously by the Frontier folk. However, it is the last political trend of thought or plan for the solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem which the writer has come across.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### And the British ?

THE third element in the Indian Melting-pot, namely, the British, is the most negligible in number. But they have a greater say in India's destiny than the other two, not excepting the Hindus, the largest in number. The hundred thousand Englishmen ruling over 350 million Indians have meant the triumph of the West with its technique, material civilization, and moral backbone. It still is a force to be reckoned with in all its aspects.

What did the English get in the way of a new spiritual outlook by their contact with the old civilizations of India? It is better to look for the answer in the English books. Here what meets the eye in connection with India can only be recorded.

The whole English adventure in India was based on economic expansion. And it stands to reason that the conquest of the vast sub-continent was made by a commercial company. Yet it would be wrong on the part of the materialist historian to say that it was that and nothing else. Prestige and glory must have played a great part in it. If the capitalist in England provided the motive and the expense once, the soldiers and the administrators had to play their part—a far more difficult one. It is doubtful whether, without the daring English youth who had to spend their superfluous energy, without the unusual ability of the administrator, the venture could have been possible or endured. Yet from the military point of view no empire has been more easily conquered. It was not the conquering which was so difficult, it was the ability to



hold it and change it to the degree the English have. And English genius was evident in the way it handled existing realities in order to establish its rule. And one of the existing realities was the Hindu-Muslem friction. Mahatma Gandhi said at the Round Table Conference, "We have chapter and verse given to us by Hindu and Mussulman historians to say that we were living in comparative peace."

This might have been the case, for it was in the interest of the Muslem administration to reduce frictions, to have as united a people as they could manage, for they had no outside centre. Though an empire, it was an empire in which the Muslem had his home. It was not a colony. Withal it must not be imagined that there was no Hindu-Muslem question. It was always there as a strong potential force to be used by any conquering people. The point for the Indian to remember is that the British have shown more ability to use Hindu-Muslem differences than the Muslem and Hindu who emphasize them, though doing so is against their proper interest. Yet the British rule does not rest only on "divide and rule." Every element which could be an asset they have used, and those elements in their favour have profited from the British rule. It may clarify the situation to repeat the elements in favour of British rule.

Native rulers come first. Their internal and external security is dependent on the British. The little finger of the British Resident has a greater power than all the paraphernalia and sacred and hereditary rights of the rulers. Some of them have made successful attempts in the way of public works and education? Nevertheless they represent an old-fashioned despotism. Neither can they afford to have anything else. For the Muslem ruler rules over a Hindu majority, and the Hindu ruler over a Muslem majority in most of the cases.

As to whether the power of the British has been beneficial or not for the masses in the native states, it is difficult to make a statement, for opinions vary. But one thing certain is that the educated in the native states are constantly comparing their states with British India. A strong extremist Indian, who is against British rule, said to the writer, "I have to go from our state to British India from time to time to breathe freely. One suffocates in this atmosphere."

Next come the upper middle-class and the big landowners. They find their security under British rule. Further, the demand of the civil service and other administrations for a large number of native recruits still makes the British the bread-giver for the middle-class Indian youth.

Then come what are vaguely called the liberals. The term is not used in the sense it is either in England or on the Continent. Some of the leading figures, such as Mahatma Gandhi and the late Dr. Ansari, were liberals in the Continental sense. But what the Indian calls a liberal usually means one who through interest, fear of disorder, an over-emphasized Westernization, or sheer snobbery, believes that British rule must be maintained in India for the benefit of India.

The masses on the other hand have been impoverished, and are worse off for British rule. The increase in their numbers do not mean either prosperity or happiness. Slum populations increase everywhere, and India for its greatest part is a rural slum. Naturally, better transport and scientific methods of handling epidemics and famine have been a factor in this increase. One can say that the anti-British feeling would be strongest among the masses the moment anyone makes them realize that their misery is due to the present rule. Withal, the political institutions and ideas due to the British have penetrated the masses as well. India is on the whole more

constitutionally-minded than any other Eastern country the writer knows. The fact that 30 millions voted in the last elections, including veiled women, is a proof that Constitutionalism is a strong factor, and even the masses look up to it as the means of bettering their condition.

Nor is this penetration only in the political domain. The influence of English culture and the British educational institutions have already been commented upon. Behind all this there are also the armed forces of the British. Hence the eventual shape of India depends largely on the attitude of the British Government. Socialism, Nationalism, Communalism, One Nation, Two Nations, etc., will be affected by the favour or disfavour of the British Government. And what will be the line of the British Government in regard to India's ultimate Independence?

At this point one has to stop and ponder over empires in general. Why have they been formed? Leaving all procedure and motives out, one historical fact remains—there has been a perpetual tendency for the agglomeration of peoples under the name of empire. Small nations as such rarely remained so for any length of time. When they had the backbone they always conquered some other nation. When small nations could not afford conquests the next thing they invariably did was to form alliances, confederations; in brief some sort of connection with a big nation, or with other small nations. One has to find some explanation for the forced or voluntary coalescence of nations. The obvious one suggests security and economic dependence. Somehow humanity cannot get away from them. The post-war period has been one for the breaking-up of empires. The very words Empire and Imperialist have come to mean something bad. But hardly had small nations found themselves turned into independent nations, than they

began forming alliances and confederations which are based on security and economic interest. The second point to note in the post-war worlds is the change in the attitude of the two great empires with colonies—namely, France and Britain. It looked for a time as if colonies were on the way of becoming co-operators. There was, anyway, a tendency to loosen the hold, a tendency towards a greater consideration for the colonial people. If the world had been in a settled state, there might have been some chance of co-operation between the colonized and the colonizer. But there are dangerous interrogation points on the horizon. There is Italy and there is Germany. Both are inspired by motives which lead to conquest—prestige, glory, race-pride, economic expansion, etc. How are the old empires going to face the new pretenders and rivals? What will be the attitude of the subject races?

And it is this new situation which makes it difficult to foretell the British attitude towards India in the near future. Will she give complete independence to India and enlist her on her side in the coming fray? Or will the world witness a period of repartition of the weaker and subject races between the stronger nations? All these questions cloud the horizon, and no one can tell what the British attitude in India will be. Such being the case the student of Indian history must look at the clues of the Indian Puzzle and reason out as best he can. Nationalism, Socialism, peace, bloody struggle, unity, separation are all there. Not only they, but “the beginning of time,” and “the end of time,” outlooks and influences are also there to give all the others a particular form. Therefore, the eye-witness who tried to study India objectively from every angle in her power reached one conclusion—the impossibility of an individual or national action or salvation. And this is best illustrated by a simple story told by Jane Adams in the

opening session of the Fellowship of Faiths in 1933, quoted by *Harijan* in its March number (1937):

There was a woman down at the bottom of a pit where she felt so very hot and uncomfortable that she sent prayer after prayer to the throne above, begging that she might be taken out. Finally the word came down to her, that if she could think of one unselfish thing she had done it might be sufficient to save her. She thought and thought a long time, and because she had been a very selfish person she simply could not think of one really unselfish act. Finally she remembered that one day she was sitting in front of her house preparing some carrots for dinner; a blind beggar came along and asked for something to eat—and she gave him a bad carrot. She realized that it was not a remarkably fine deed, but as it was the only one she could think of, she sent that up as her one unselfish act. Very soon there came down into the pit a carrot on a string. She was told to take hold of it. Clinging to the carrot she went up and up into an atmosphere less lurid where she was getting quite comfortable. Then all of a sudden, as she looked down she saw that somebody was hanging on to her feet, and as she gazed further down she was horrified to see that somebody was hanging on to his feet, and someone on his, so that there was a long line of humanity suspended below her. Suddenly she realized that the carrot was bad—a rotten one, in fact, so that she grew frightened and thought that it would break. She called down, "Let go of me; it is my carrot. It is my chance to get up!" And immediately the carrot did break—and they all went down together.

And Jane Adams concluded:

No one is going to get up by himself; we must all go up together if we go up at all.

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